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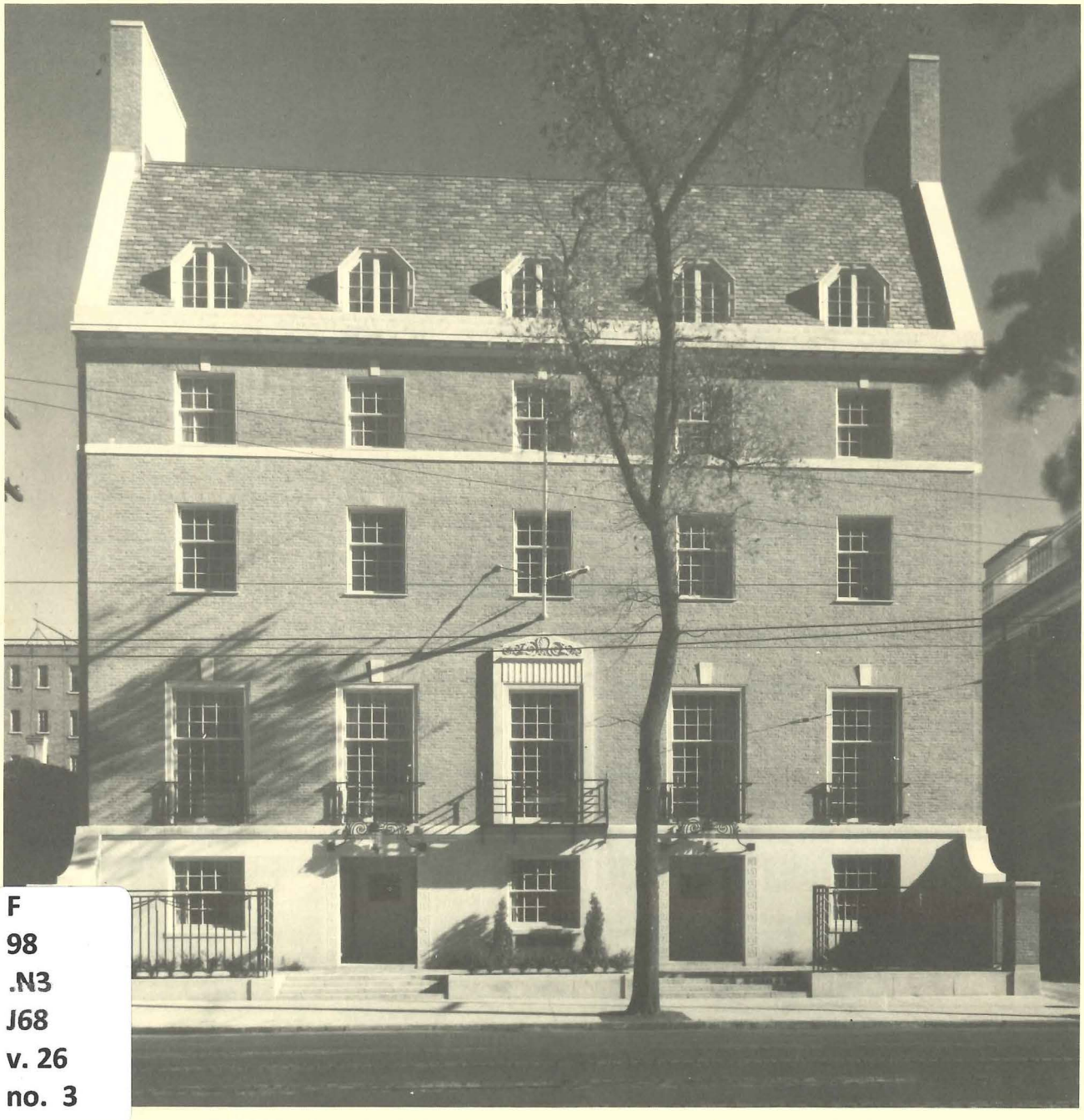
of The New Haven Colony Historical Society



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Cover: The clubhouse for the Quinnipiack Club is as attractive and comfortable today as it was when it was finished nearly fifty years ago. Douglas Orr's handsome neo-colonial design is timeless. (Story on page 3.)

Erratum: A typographical error in the Spring 1979 issue of the *Journal* identified it incorrectly as volume 26, number 1. It should have been listed as volume 26, number 2.

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THE NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY was founded in 1862 by a representative group of New Haven citizens. As stated in the Constitution adopted by the Society, revised in 1965:

"The object of the Society shall be the collection, preservation and publication of historical and genealogical matter relating to the early settlement and subsequent history, especially of New Haven and its vicinity, and incidentally of other portions of the United States."

The museum and library of the Society are open to the public. There is a fee of $1 to non-members for use of the library; the museum is open free of charge. In addition to the Whitney Avenue building, the Society owns the Pardee-Morris House at 325 Lighthouse Road, Morris Cove, New Haven. Built originally in 1685, it was burned during the British invasion in 1779. Rebuilt at once, it incorporates surviving portions of the older structure. The Pardee-Morris House is now restored and furnished appropriately and is open free of charge to the public during the summer months.

The Administrative Headquarters of the Southern New England Telephone Company. This Art Deco building represents Douglas Orr at his best. No handsomer office building has been built in New Haven, before or since. Immediately to the right is Orr's Quinnipiack Club.

Douglas Orr's New Haven

by William A. Wiedersheim

Douglas William Orr, F.A.I.A. (1892-1966), left a stronger architectural imprint on commercial, social and religious New Haven than any man since Henry Austin (1841-1906). He was one of the best known and most highly respected architects in the country and was the only Yale alumnus ever to serve as President of the American Institute of Architects. Yet there is no listing under his name in the file cards of the Yale School of Architecture library, and the Registrar of the School has no record of his name.

It is said that architecture is an especially difficult profession because to be successful, one must be an artist, a planner, an engineer, a businessman and, above all, a salesman. Douglas Orr was endowed with an abundance of all these characteristics, and they carried him to the top of his profession. He was born on March 25, 1892, in Meriden, the son of Adam and Mary (Blair) Orr, and attended public grammar and high schools there. In high school, his ability to work with people began to shine through, for he was senior class president and manager of the football team.

Although his family lived in modest circumstances, Orr was able to attend Yale and enroll in its School of Fine Arts as an embryonic architect. As a student, he was a brilliant designer and received not one but two medals from the Society of Beaux Arts Architects, an almost unheard-of distinction. In 1917 he married Helen Merriam Converse of Meriden, a childhood friend, in what the Meriden newspaper described as an "elaborate ceremony." They had one daughter, Ann (now Mrs. John A. Logan), who resides with her family in Guilford in a handsome home designed for her by her father, with a dramatic view of Long Island Sound.

At the outbreak of the war in 1917, Orr enlisted in the construction branch of the Air Service of the Army Signal Corps, today's Air Force, as a 1st Sergeant, and received training as an aerial observer. He was later commissioned and

promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. He just missed going overseas and returned to Yale in time to receive a B.F.A. degree in 1919. As the outstanding scholar and designer of his class, he was awarded the coveted William Wirt Winchester Fellowship, which enabled him to travel in England and on the continent in 1920 and 1921. He carried his watercolor paints and brushes with him and returned home with a portfolio bursting with paintings, some of them delicate renderings of classic details in famous English and Italian buildings.

When he returned, Orr started his architectural practice in partnership with George H. del Grella at 956 Chapel Street. In 1926, del Grella withdrew from the partnership, and Douglas Orr was on his own. In resumés for presentation to prospective clients, he always said that he had been engaged in "the general practice of architecture in New England since 1926." He continued to take courses at Yale and in 1927 received an M.F.A. degree.

Orr loved people, and people were attracted to him. He was a great "joiner" and was a member of the New Haven Lawn Club, the Quinnipiack Club, the New Haven Country Club, the Graduates Club, the Century and Yale Clubs of New York and the Farmington Country Club of Charlottesville. He was a Free and Accepted Mason and a member of the Congregational Church. He was elected to membership in the Dissenters, a small, exclusive group of senior Yale professors and top administrators, plus a select handful of outsiders, that meets to listen to erudite papers and tell jokes that are often ribald. Orr had a keen wit, great charm and self-assurance.

Orr's interest in people, his tireless energy, talents and ability to delegate were the keys to his success. He was what one would call today a "workaholic." While he was a noted architect, he was not a great designer in the sense that his contemporaries Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Louis Kahn were. Yet he and his staff designed more buildings than any of them. Even at the height of his career, he was never too busy to handle humble projects. One year the list included alterations to McLagon's Gas Station, a small colonial structure he had designed some years before. His jobs included scores of alterations, some extensive, many minor.

His very first commission was for the design of a small library in Moodus, Connecticut, but most of his early commissions were for residences, and he quickly earned a reputation for designing handsome, liveable homes. The designs were his personal statement. Although overshadowed by major commissions, over the years an ongoing stream of excellent residential design emanated from Orr's office.

Functional planning was another of Orr's strengths. His buildings always "worked" well. But with form following function, exterior designs sometimes suffered.

Orr had been trained in the Beaux Arts tradition and was at his best in the colonial style. Elizabeth Mills Brown calls his touch "A colonial-federal format."*

*Elizabeth Mills Brown, *New Haven: A Guide to Architecture and Urban Design* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1976.

His was a stylistic colonial, typical of the late 1920s and 1930s, slick, opulent and appealing. An Orr trademark in his colonial work was a carefully positioned, decorative, small octagonal or round window high up on a façade.

In the 1930s, Orr's designs moved on into the *Moderne* or Art Deco style, the Southern New England Telephone Company administration building (with R.W. Foote as associated architect) on Church Street being his best commercial building in this vein.

Orr was less sure of himself in the contemporary design of the 1950s and 1960s, and his designs in the contemporary manner were uneven. Most of them can be considered average for their time, typical of buildings being designed then by architects from coast to coast. After Orr was joined by William deCossy and Frank Winder as partners in 1963, the firm turned out consistently good contemporary design, an example being the city's Community Services Building on State Street, built in 1965.

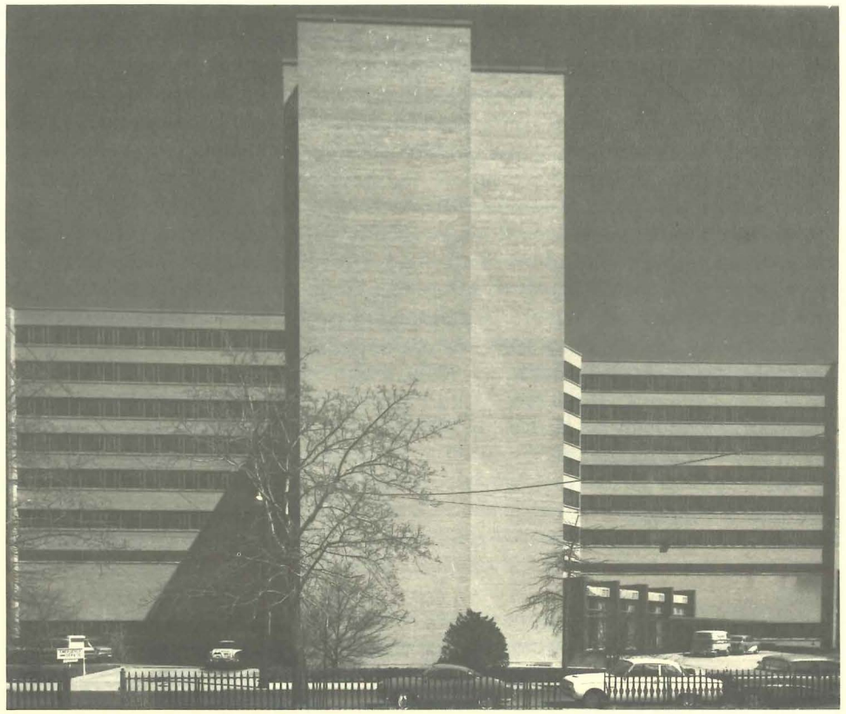
Early in his career the opportunity to be one of the Southern New England Telephone Company's designing architects came to Orr. The Telephone Company was growing rapidly, and this was a great plum for a young architect. In all, between 1927 and 1960, Orr designed forty-four local telephone exchanges throughout the State of Connecticut. Many of these were small, sturdy buildings, constructed of the best materials and nicely detailed in Orr's best neo-colonial manner. A few, such as the exchange in Waterbury, were large.

But telephone exchanges were not what brought Douglas Orr to the attention of prospective clients. In 1929 the Directors of the New Haven Lawn Club commissioned Orr to design a new clubhouse to replace the original, which had burned to the ground. This he did in his opulent "town and country" neo-colonial manner. The building is handsome and stylish, both inside and out, and it still functions well for the many uses to which it is put. Orr's trademark of a small octagonal window appears high over the front door. No building is perfect, and the Lawn Club has some faults. But half a century after it was designed it still serves its members well.

In 1930 Orr was commissioned to design the present Quinnipiack Club. This building, too, was designed in his sophisticated neo-colonial style. A narrow lot did not prevent the creation of a comfortable clubhouse, one that nearly fifty years after it was built still looks bright and new and continues to function well.

Douglas Orr's practice was now growing rapidly, and he was well launched on his professional career. One satisfied client led to another. Work began to come to his office, which was moved to 96 Grove Street in 1934. In 1926 there were nineteen commissions in the office. In 1928 there were twenty-seven. During the Depression, when most architects were struggling to keep their doors open, Orr continued to enjoy a good level of work with twenty commissions in 1931 and in 1932. In 1936 thirty-two commissions moved through the office. There was a lull during World War II, but in 1953 there were forty-one jobs, and in 1955 sixty-seven moved through the office.

At the height of his career, Orr's office expanded to about thirty architects,



Our trip to Hamden starts here. The Memorial Unit is a complex, modern hospital that functions well. Douglas Orr designed this and several other key buildings at the Yale-New Haven Hospital.

draftsmen, secretaries and field supervisors. These were directed by Orr's senior associates, Robbins H. Miller, H. Dillingham Palmer and Richard H. Fletcher, the type of job captains and designers no busy architectural office can be without. Sometimes Orr would return from a conference with a client, turn the conference notes over to Miller, Palmer or Fletcher, and design and planning would begin. Orr had a great sense of conceptual design, and his brilliantly drawn sketches were the beginning of much of the design in the office. Once during an outdoor meeting with the Headmaster of the Choate School, he drew a plan on a scrap of paper, turned it over to a senior associate and told him that this was to be the design.

In his early years, Orr stayed on top of each job in the office, sketching, supervising and counseling as it progressed. He was as interested in the development of a small detail by a young draftsman as he was in the overall plan, and he was in the thick of things in the drafting room. But in later years, as

his practice and outside commitments grew, Orr was forced to spend more and more time away from his office, and from New Haven, with clients, prospective clients and professional committees. He enjoyed this and was superb at establishing and maintaining rapport with them. By then his staff was a well coordinated team. Miller, "Ding" Palmer and Dick Fletcher, his senior associates, were experienced, had worked together for several years, and could be relied upon to make sound day-to-day decisions. They assumed an increased responsibility for design and working drawings. During Orr's absences, which were frequent but usually brief, work continued to flow through the drafting room in an orderly, efficient manner. Much of Orr's outside activity was necessary to the growth of his practice, some of it was his dedication to public service and some he merely enjoyed as a part of his ebullient nature. And Orr was always on hand when critical decisions were to be made, for in the eyes of a client, responsibility for a finished design was Orr's alone.

At some point, however, his outside concerns caused Orr to lose some control over the creative process in his office. His staff was loyal and capable, but not always consistent. After World War II, most of the designs developed by his staff were excellent, some were average, typical of their times, but a few, which Orr accepted, were uninspired. Orr presented these designs to the clients, and the buildings were built. Unfortunately, this led some to feel that the Office of Douglas Orr and Associates was prone to design in mass-production fashion. Eventually, in 1963, Orr brought William deCossy and Frank Winder, talented young architects trained in the contemporary style, into the organization to strengthen its design capabilities. It might have been advantageous to his practice had he done this a decade earlier. Too often he spread himself too thin.

In his last two or three years of practice, Orr rarely went into the drafting room, which was being run efficiently by his new, young partners and senior associates. Either this was a way of letting his new partners take over, or, being over seventy years of age, Douglas Orr was beginning to slow down. He had his own drafting table in his private office, and his conceptual sketches were still those of a consummate artist.

Orr chose not to specialize by building type and repeatedly said to his staff, "To specialize is to fossilize." When faced with special design requirements, Orr did not bring in consultants. He preferred that his own staff research and solve the design problems involved. With the great variety of commissions, the staff became very versatile. Robbins Miller was his expert on the equipment, materials and design requirements for hospitals and related health-care facilities. "Ding" Palmer generally concerned himself with residences and residential buildings for schools and colleges, as did William Douglas. The Telephone Company buildings were generally handled by Fletcher, as were office buildings, including liaison among owner, architect and contractor during construction. Orr's brother-in-law, Ted Converse, did much of the firm's mechanical engineering, and Mrs. Margaret Vilas did renderings for client

conferences. At first Orr wrote the specifications for each job himself, but as his practice grew, a particular member of the staff, usually Roscoe Smith or Ed Dunn, was assigned this task. Orr was his own expert for campus planning and also kept an eagle eye on the firm's cash flow and finances. But for structural engineering, Orr used the outside services of Henry Pfisterer, an engineer who had the ability to understand the aesthetic objectives of an architect.

Today an architect's presentation to a prospective client may well involve slides and sophisticated audio-visual equipment. Orr's presentations were low key, soft sell. His personal charm carried the burden of the discussion. Orr handled all new business development and most client relations himself, delegating some of the latter in later years to Richard H. Fletcher, particularly those on out-of-state jobs ranging from New England to Washington, D.C., West Virginia and Texas.

The atmosphere of the drafting room was cheerful, earnest and disciplined. The variety of work flowing through the office gave a young architect a very special experience, and the prestige of Orr's office drew the cream of each year's architectural school graduates. Most stayed two or three years for experience, then moved on. A few developed a hero worship for Orr and remained with the firm. It was always "Mr. Orr," never "Doug," and like any good executive, Orr could be tough when necessary.

Too often in the construction business architect-contractor relations became strained. Orr's relations with the contractors on his jobs were usually good. He was firm but fair. A contractor rated an "extra" only when it was deserved because of some fault or oversight in the drawings or specifications. Orr was very conscious of a job's budget; his clients did not suddenly find that their projects unexpectedly exceeded original budget estimates by great amounts.

When he set up his own practice in 1926, Orr's business letterhead read "Douglas Orr, Architect." To give his senior associates more stature, in the late 1930s the letterhead was changed to read "The Office of Douglas Orr and Associates," and the names of key associates were listed on it. But the associates were not partners. It was very much Douglas Orr's organization, and he remained firmly in charge. One of the very first people Orr hired when he opened his own office in 1926 was his personal secretary, Miss Julia Sveda, who was then starting her first job. She remained his secretary until he died in 1966 and still, in 1979, fifty-three years later, has secretarial duties in the successor firm.

As he approached his seventieth year, Orr realized that he would soon be retiring and was anxious that the creative organization he had built up should continue as a productive entity. Thus in 1963 he brought the two talented young architects William deCossy and Frank Winder into his organization as partners. There was considerable realignment within the firm when it became a partnership under the name of Douglas Orr, deCossy, Winder and Associates. Some associates departed, and new faces appeared in their place. It is still a very

active firm today under the name of Douglas Orr, Winder and Associates, much as Douglas Orr would have wished it to be.

Orr did a great deal of work for schools and colleges. He and his staff prepared long-range plans for Brown, Bryn Mawr, Hollins, Oberlin and, with Eero Saarinen, Yale. For twelve years he was the consulting architect to Princeton and, as an Eli, received an amusing citation of appreciation, signed by Princeton's president. He designed four buildings, a chemistry laboratory and three dormitories, for Mount Holyoke College; several buildings, including a student center, for Hollins College; and the Memorial Chapel and Chase Hall dormitory in his best neo-colonial style for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He designed faculty housing at the University of Connecticut at Storrs and was associated in the design of the chapel at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. And he designed more than twenty-five projects for Yale, a greater number than James Gamble Rogers.

The schools which came to him as clients included Ethel Walker, Tabor, Westminster, Westover, Taft, Hopkins Grammar and Choate. He designed schools for the towns of North Haven, Cheshire, Bethany, Seymour and Lebanon.

In all, Orr designed eight churches and two parish houses. He designed YMCAs in New Haven, Ansonia and Middletown and was associated in the design of one in Greensboro, N.C. He drew plans for office buildings and hospitals for clients scattered between Rutland, Vermont and Houston, Texas, including a giant 280,000-square-foot office building for the Columbia Gas System in Charleston, West Virginia. When it was built in 1954, it was the second-largest building in the state. He took special pride in his design for the Robert Taft Memorial Carillon in Washington, D.C. Truly, his and his staff's versatility was amazing.

But Douglas Orr was a New Haven architect, and we are concerned with the volume and quality of his work in the city of New Haven. Imagine a drive from the front steps of the Memorial Unit of the Yale-New Haven Hospital to Hamden, along some of New Haven's main traffic arteries. Douglas Orr designed the Memorial Unit as the Grace-New Haven Hospital. While its exterior may look cumbersome, the building functions well as a complex modern hospital. Across the way are Orr's Hunter Radiation Therapy Laboratory, a compatible addition to the old Yale Hospital, his Laboratory of Clinical Investigation (with E. Todd Wheeler, Perkins and Will), an addition and several alterations to the Sterling Hall of Medicine, and his Harkness Student Dormitory (with Gugler, Kimball and Husted). Behind the Memorial Unit on Park Street are the former Grace-New Haven School of Nursing and the all-important hospital laundry building, both designed by Orr.

Next we go down Howard Avenue and turn left onto Congress and in a few moments see Yale's Laboratory of Epidemiology and Public Health. Here Orr and Philip Johnson were associated, and the building's tiny windows were surely

The First New Haven National Bank (now FirstBank) building, constructed in 1960 in New Haven's urban renewal area, is a downtown bank headquarters typical of its time. As a director of the bank, Orr was in a sense his own client. (Malcolm Smith photo)

Johnson's idea. But Orr and his staff prepared the working drawings, oversaw construction and kept it moving along.

As we cross over the "Connector," on the left we see the general office building of the Southern New England Telephone Company with its blue-green curtain wall, a building typical of the late 1950s and early 1960s. In terms of square footage, it is large and dominates many of the aerial photos taken of New Haven. In Orr's office the building was known as the "Green Giant."

On the right, in the distance, we see the former executive office building of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, designed by Douglas Orr. This building is a somber and harshly rectangular box, not one of Orr's best designs, and it illustrates Orr's difficulty with the contemporary style. The glass brick panels over the windows date the building as mid-1940s.

Now we are on Church Street and pass, on the right, the headquarters office building of the First Bank (formerly the First New Haven Bank), an Orr design built in 1960. As Orr was a Director of the Bank, he was, in a sense, his own client. The design is straightforward and typical of its time, but somewhat bland. It certainly lacks the fine detailing, strength and quality of the Southern New England Telephone Company headquarters building he designed twenty years earlier. Considering the client, it falls short of being the outstanding bank headquarters building it could have been.

If we peer down George Street, we see the arresting Community Services Building, completed in 1965, designed by Douglas Orr, deCossy, Winder and Associates. It is beautifully designed on a difficult site. With strong horizontal planes and an attractive interior courtyard garden which one does not see from the street, it is an example of excellent contemporary design.

On the left, at the head of Crown Street, is Orr's YMCA building, one that seemingly cannot decide what style it expresses, but which functions well. A block farther along, up Chapel Street on the left, is the new wing of the Yale Art Gallery. Louis Kahn is quite properly credited with the design, but the Office of Douglas Orr and Associates was associated with him. It has been said that Orr was brought into the job to protect Yale's interests budgetwise, and to keep the job moving. Kahn had trouble making decisions, and Orr had drafting and job supervision facilities that Kahn did not have at the time.

In a second we see Trinity Church on the Green. Here the client's requirements were to hollow an undercroft out of the plenum space below the historic church nave, and to provide stairs leading from the chancel to the new undercroft below. This required most exacting and delicate structural design because new underpinnings for the key structural elements that supported the church were involved. Fortunately, Orr was able to obtain stone from the same quarry and of the same rich hue as the stone of the original church from a nearby residence that was being razed, so that the exterior color and texture of the new stair wells match the stone of the original church almost perfectly.

Behind the Green are Yale's venerable Old Campus dormitories, including

Welch, Farnam and Lawrance Halls. In 1938 these buildings were extensively remodeled by Douglas Orr. Behind Welch Hall is Connecticut Hall, Yale's oldest building. With Orr as architect-in-charge, but in association with Gugler, Kimball and Husted, the building was gutted in 1953, and the ancient roof, rafters and wooden joists were removed. A new interior steel structural support system was placed in the hollow shell formed by the exterior walls that supported a new interior plan consisting of meeting, seminar and guest rooms.

Across the Old Campus from Connecticut Hall is Linsly-Chittenden Hall, which, until completion of the Sterling Memorial Library, was Yale's main library. After the books had been moved to Sterling in 1930, Orr remodeled the interior of Linsly-Chittenden into a warren of lecture halls and classrooms that are in use today just as he planned them nearly fifty years ago. Wisely, he did not disturb the Louis Tiffany windows in Chittenden.

Nearby is Mory's, almost as famous as Yale itself. Much of the way Mory's functions today is due to alterations, particularly to the kitchen, made by Douglas Orr.

A block west of Mory's on Park Street is St. Thomas More Chapel, a particularly successful design. When it was completed in 1938, it was considered daringly modern. The design has been attributed by some to William Douglas and by others to Douglas Orr. This is what happened: William Douglas was a young architect employed by Douglas Orr from the late 1920s to the late 1930s. He was a great friend of the Reverend T. Lawrason Riggs, the Yale Catholic chaplain. In 1937 Douglas, who was said to be going through a Swedish period, received the commission to design the chapel. This he did, independently, but in Orr's office. Orr signed the working drawings, which made Orr legally responsible for the structural soundness of the building. William Douglas and Douglas Orr were good friends, and Orr would have been the first to give Douglas full credit for the charming design with its fine proportions and nordic touches. William Douglas later became Director of the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London.

Returning to Church Street, we pass City Hall, on the right. In 1928 Douglas Orr was one of three finalists in a competition for the design of a new city hall. Unfortunately, the project did not go ahead. With fanfare and publicity, Mayor Tower praised the designs proposed by the three finalists; then the whole project was shelved.

One competition Orr did win was that for the design of the flagpole on the New Haven Green, which memorializes those from New Haven who fell in World War I. Its figures in relief at the base are handsome and appropriate.

In a moment on the right we pass the Quinnipiack Club and the handsome administration headquarters of the Southern New England Telephone Company. The latter is pure Art Deco, down to the specially designed door pulls. The lobby walls are of polished Spanish marble; the metal work is white bronze. These materials would be expensive today, but were readily available at

attractive prices in the late 1930s when construction took place. The exterior is beautifully detailed; even the window muntins play a major role in the building's appearance. The client instructed Orr to design a building that would not become "dated" in the future. Orr succeeded admirably, for the Telephone Company a generation later still received compliments on its "new" building. No handsomer office building has been built in New Haven, before or since. Behind it on Orange Street is a later and larger Telephone Company equipment building, also designed by Orr—but a pale imitation.

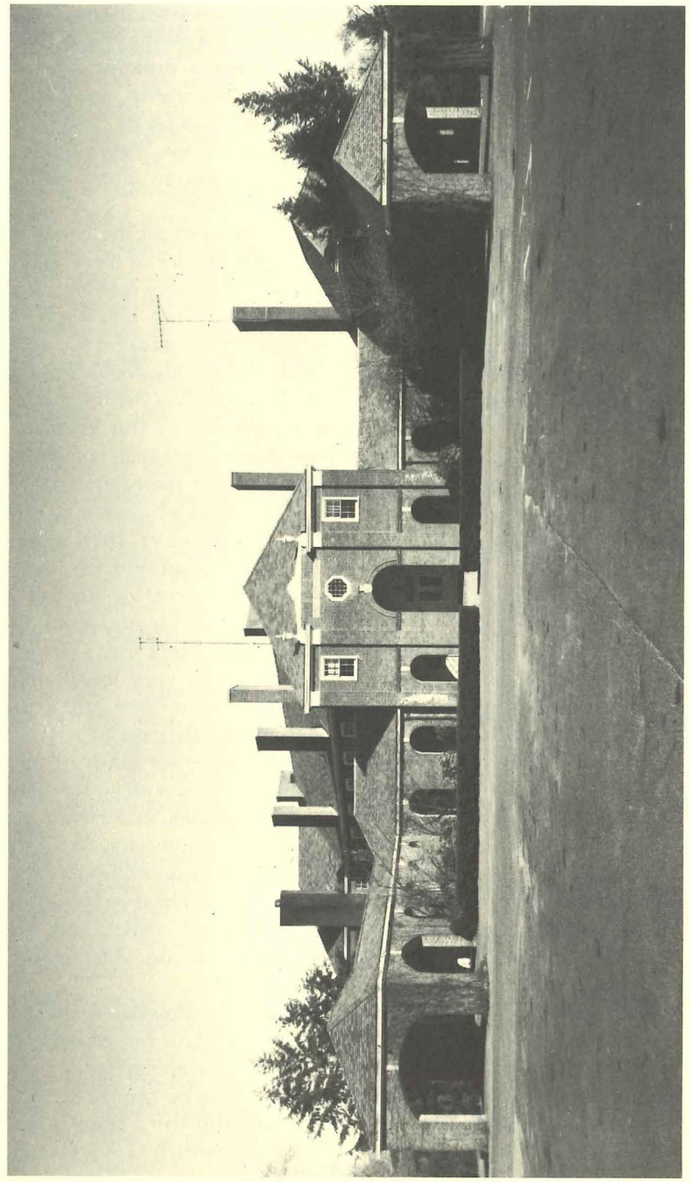
Now Church Street runs into Whitney Avenue, and on the left is the elegant Berzelius Society tomb, designed in 1910 by Don Barber of New York City. Orr planned interior alterations in 1933. In true secret society fashion, the drawings of the interior remodeling plans have disappeared from Orr's job files.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when fraternities still played an important role in Yale undergraduate life, the members of three Sheffield Scientific School fraternities, Franklin Hall (now the office of Yale's Vice President for Financial Affairs), St. Elmo Hall (the Yale language laboratory) and Vernon Hall—Phi Gamma Delta (the office of Yale's Associate Treasurer) each commissioned Orr to plan and supervise extensive interior alterations to their handsome fraternity houses. The members of Vernon Hall—Phi Gamma Delta were so pleased with the results in their house, and so charmed by Douglas Orr, that, when the work was completed in 1928, they elected him to full membership. Orr was flattered, took the election and initiation seriously and thereafter always listed Phi Gamma Delta among the social organizations to which he belonged.

Behind the Berzelius tomb is Helen Hadley Hall. Here Orr's design program had several obstacles to overcome. He was given a very low budget, but he managed to stay within it. The site was narrow and confined, and the result was a pedestrian structure that is difficult to praise and difficult to criticize. It is not unlike dormitories designed by many other architects for many other campuses that do not have Yale's high building standards. It seems an ad hoc afterthought to the university's magnificent dormitory quadrangles, and Helen Hadley Hall strained Orr's professional relationship with the university administration.

On Prospect Street, two blocks to the west, Orr designed two buildings in the enclave that was the Berkeley Divinity School: the library-classroom building (Now Yale's social science library), and the chapel, which was successfully created out of a barn on the site, a charming remodeling. (The chapel has been remodeled again and is now a Yale dining hall.)

To the right is 111 Whitney Avenue, which Orr remodeled and to which he moved his offices in the fall of 1949 to accommodate his growing staff. The façade is of beige stucco, dignified and restrained. In an earlier day the building had been the home of William Howard Taft when he taught at the Yale Law School. Orr, Miller and Palmer had offices on the third floor where designs were created and fed down to the drafting room, which was well administered by Fletcher on the second floor.



The New Haven Lawn Club was designed in an opulent neo-colonial style in which Douglas Orr was at his best. Note the small, octagonal window over the main entrance, an Orr trademark.

To the left, again, is Yale's science area. After World War II Yale realized that it had built no science buildings since 1923, whereas M.I.T., the University of California (Berkeley) and others had built new research and teaching facilities for the nuclear and electronic ages. Yale had to catch up quickly. There was no single donor on the horizon, so Yale assembled funds from various sources and commissioned Douglas Orr to design an addition to the Dunham Laboratory of Electrical Engineering, a new physics laboratory (with Paul Schweikher) and an addition to the Peabody Museum. Budgets were tight, and in all three designs Orr used narrow piers to support a thin concrete slab roof, with a variety of fenestration and panels between the piers. The ends of the structures were blank masonry walls.

The addition to the Dunham Laboratory is one of Orr's poorest designs, awkward in proportion and weak in color. To build the Dunham Laboratory addition it was necessary to demolish the historic home of Joseph Sheffield, donor of the funds that founded the Sheffield Scientific School. In writing about Orr's Dunham Laboratory addition, Elizabeth Mills Brown says, "It is hard to look at the Dunham addition without pain—it was for this the Sheffield house was demolished."

Possibly because of Paul Schweikher's participation in the design, the proportions of the Gibbs Physics Laboratory are more pleasing, its color stronger and its silhouette against the sky commanding. The rather ordinary-looking blue curtain wall panels of the Ornithology Laboratory, the addition to the Peabody Museum, were probably intended as a colorful contrast to the somewhat somber red of the museum. All three of the structures are said to function well.

In 1953 the Office of Douglas Orr designed the Nuclear Accelerator building adjacent to the Gibbs Physics Laboratory. A decade later Douglas Orr, deCossy, Winder and Associates designed the Nuclear Structures Laboratory, part of which is underground.

Across Whitney Avenue from the Peabody Museum is the curious addition to the Security Insurance Building, designed by Orr in 1950 and now occupied by Yale. It was designed as an eight-story building, but Orr's client cut it off at the third floor, intending to complete the structure at a later date. Here Orr reverted to the Art Deco of the 1930s, and the building's cavernous hallways waste a great deal of space.

Orr's Lawn Club is concealed by his Connecticut Medical Services building. The latter is well proportioned and nicely detailed. It is a building that will wear well with the years, typical of Orr's designs of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and a good one.

To the left farther out Whitney Avenue, almost concealed by trees, is the Bethesda Lutheran Church, completed in 1958, one of Orr's most attractive designs. Here again the window muntins play a role in the decorative scheme of the interior and exterior, and the building's siting and proportions are pleasing.

Behind the Bethesda Lutheran Church is New Haven's "Gold Coast," where there are numerous Orr-designed homes, including the magnificent George Berger residence of 1927, now a part of Albertus Magnus College, the George Mabee home, and others. In the same area Orr designed Spartan married student housing and the Dean's residence at the Yale Divinity School. The budget was miserly, and the results show it. For the first time in the memory of man, Yale did not go first class in a building project. When Yale's President A. Whitney Griswold first saw the newly completed buildings, he was reported to have said, "Tear them down!"

A few blocks north is the Jenkins Memorial Laboratory at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. An old hand at the Station praises the Jenkins Laboratory as the most functional in the complex. The north façade facing East Rock Road responds nicely to the residential character of the neighborhood, despite an incongruous clerestory. But the south façade facing the campus has an art deco entrance that does not fit with Orr's trademark colonial windows, near the ground this time, and the colonial cupola. The net result is an awkward façade. The floors were formed with foam concrete, an innovative technique when the Jenkins Memorial Laboratory was built in 1932.

Proceeding out Whitney Avenue, one passes to the right the Church of the Redeemer, one of Orr's best and happiest designs. It is really Georgian, and the richly columned interior and exterior pilasters are a handsome combination. To create a pleasing balance between the church and the parish house, Orr placed a belfry at the rear of the church. There were protests from those who expected a conventional colonial steeple over the church entrance, so Orr had to "sell" the unusual location of the tower to a skeptical congregation. The handsome result proved Orr right. Orr's trademark windows are carefully positioned on the tower, and the Church of the Redeemer seems to "belong" in the New Haven scene. "Ding" Palmer made major contributions to its design.

The eye-catching First Church of Christ Scientist a few blocks farther along Whitney Avenue, completed in 1950, is less successful. The raised pathway approach is handsome, the structure being well set back from the street. But the exterior elevations are rigid and lack relaxing grace. The church spire gives a faintly *King and I* asiatic flavor, and it is a good example of Orr's uncertainty in handling contemporary design.

To the left of Whitney Avenue on Ogden and Armory Streets are some of Orr's most interesting houses. Elizabeth Mills Brown describes Ogden Street as one of the most stylish in the neighborhood, and it is graced by two of Orr's houses. On Armory Street there are several more, including one of his first designs.

Finally at Davis Street in Hamden we come to Orr's Lakeview Apartments. Here he was once again forced to work within a tight budget, and the detailing suffers as a result. The entrances to the apartment units lack dignity and are more what one would expect in public housing. The rooms of each apartment

The eye-catching Christian Science church has a handsome approach. But its lines are rigid, and the spire gives the building a faintly "King and I" asiatic look. (Joseph W. Molitor photograph)

are small, but the Lakeview Apartments are always fully rented with a waiting list for vacancies.

The route from the Memorial Unit out Whitney Avenue to Hamden gives one an idea of Douglas Orr's versatility as an architect, and of the impressive volume of his work. Of course, he did a great deal of work elsewhere in New Haven. At Long Wharf, with deCossy and Winder as partners, the firm designed the Blakeslee office and warehouse (now Southern Connecticut Community College), completed in 1966, and the Sargent plant and offices, completed in 1963, both examples of good contemporary design. In 1953 he designed the administration building for Southern Connecticut State College. He designed the Elm Haven public housing (with R.W. Foote) and the McConaughy Terrace public housing of 300 units. In 1933 he designed a major addition to the original Berger Brothers plant, followed by numerous expansions over the next few years. And on the outskirts of the city he designed a field house for the Hopkins Grammar School and facilities at the Yale Golf Course. Douglas Orr certainly left his mark on the physical New Haven!

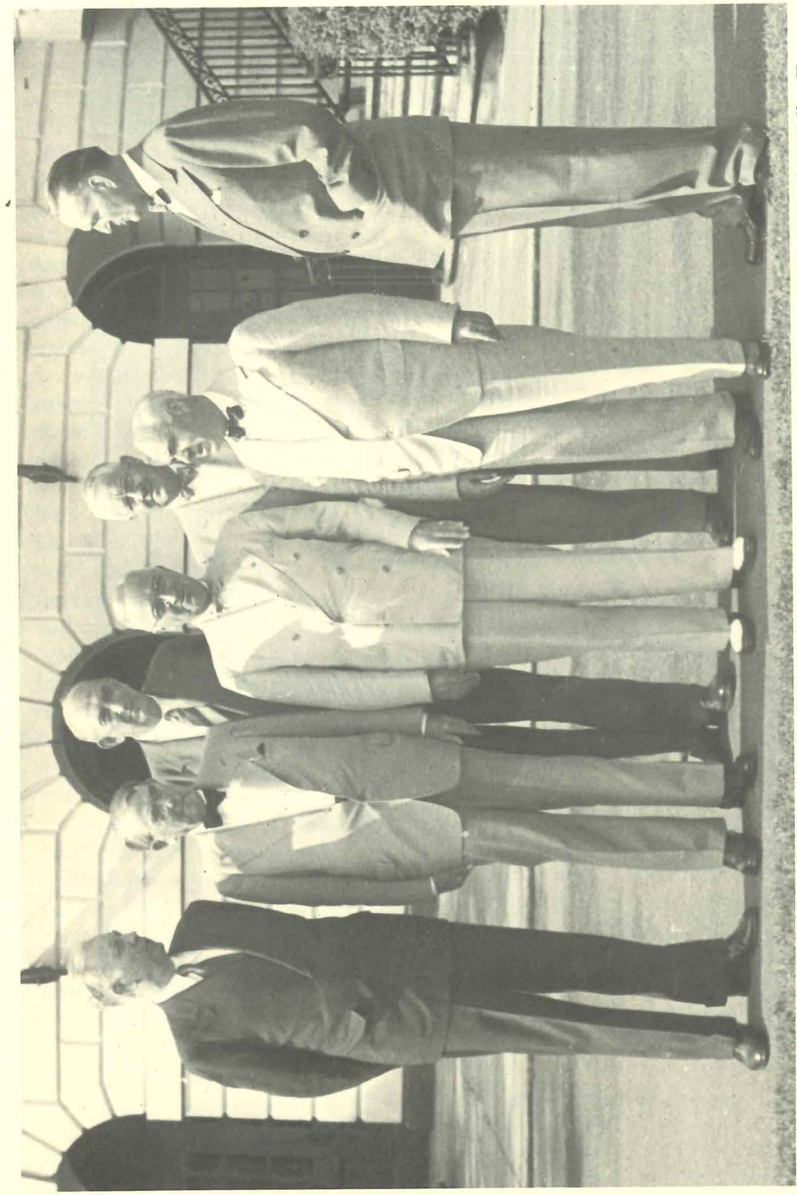
With this tremendous output of work here and elsewhere, one might think that Orr had little time for service to his community and profession. Nothing could be further from the truth! He was a productive member of the Branford Board of Education for six years and attended meetings regularly. Orr joined the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) in 1927, and his innate leadership brought him the presidency of its Connecticut chapter in 1934. By chance, during his term of office the state architectural licensing regulations were established. The State Board of Licensing Examiners consisted of seven men, and they took license numbers one through seven for themselves. As President of the A.I.A. chapter, Orr was awarded architectural license number eight, which he cherished as long as he practiced.

In 1939, Orr was elected a Fellow of the A.I.A., a symbol of the respect of his professional colleagues. In 1943 he became New England Regional Director and in 1947 national President of the A.I.A., the highest accolade of his profession. He was an innovative president, establishing a national annual awards program, renovating the Octagon, the historic national headquarters of the A.I.A. in Washington, D.C., and establishing research on atomic age architecture. Presidency of the A.I.A. brought Orr an honorary corresponding membership in the Royal Institute of British Architects. Douglas Orr, the young man from Meriden, had become an architect of national importance.

One tends to forget that the interior of the White House is scarcely thirty years old. In 1947 the original structure was found to be unsound, and between 1948 and 1952 the building was gutted, the exterior walls braced and a new steel-framed interior closely matching the old was built. President Truman appointed Orr to the six-man Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion. The only architect on the Commission, he was elected its Vice-Chairman and was a persuasive voice in urging the Committee to preserve the White House exterior walls for the sake of history and the building's character rather than to demolish the entire structure and build anew as some Committee members would have done.

While design of the project was handled by Lorenzo Winslow, F.A.I.A., the White House architect, Orr's sure knowledge of colonial design rendered him an invaluable member of the Commission. The experience of remodeling an historic building by gutting it stood him in good stead when he was in charge of remodeling Connecticut Hall at Yale a few years later. Orr prepared a paper on the tremendous task of rebuilding the White House to read to fellow Dissenters and gave a number of talks on the subject to civic groups.

In 1954 Orr was elected President of the American Architectural Foundation, the research arm of the A.I.A. concerned with building materials and building material standards. Allied with this, Orr had a long-standing personal interest in desalinization and in radiant heating. He was early in his recognition of their undoubted future importance to mankind and in 1947 was selected by a national board of architects to design a model solar home.



The Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion, left to right: Senator Edward Martin, Pennsylvania; Senator Kenneth McKellar, Tennessee (Chairman); Richard E. Dougherty, President, American Society of Civil Engineers; President Truman (Ex-officio); Douglas W. Orr, F.A.I.A., President, American Institute of Architects (Vice-Chairman); Representative Louis C. Rabaut, Michigan; Representative Frank B. Keefe, Wisconsin.

Douglas Orr was elected an Academician of the National Academy of Design, and between 1955 and 1963 was a member of the National Fine Arts Commission. In 1957 President Eisenhower appointed him to the President's Advisory Committee on Office Space, and that same year he was elected a member of the Smithsonian Art Commission and chaired a committee of the Health, Education and Welfare Department on hospital architectural standards.

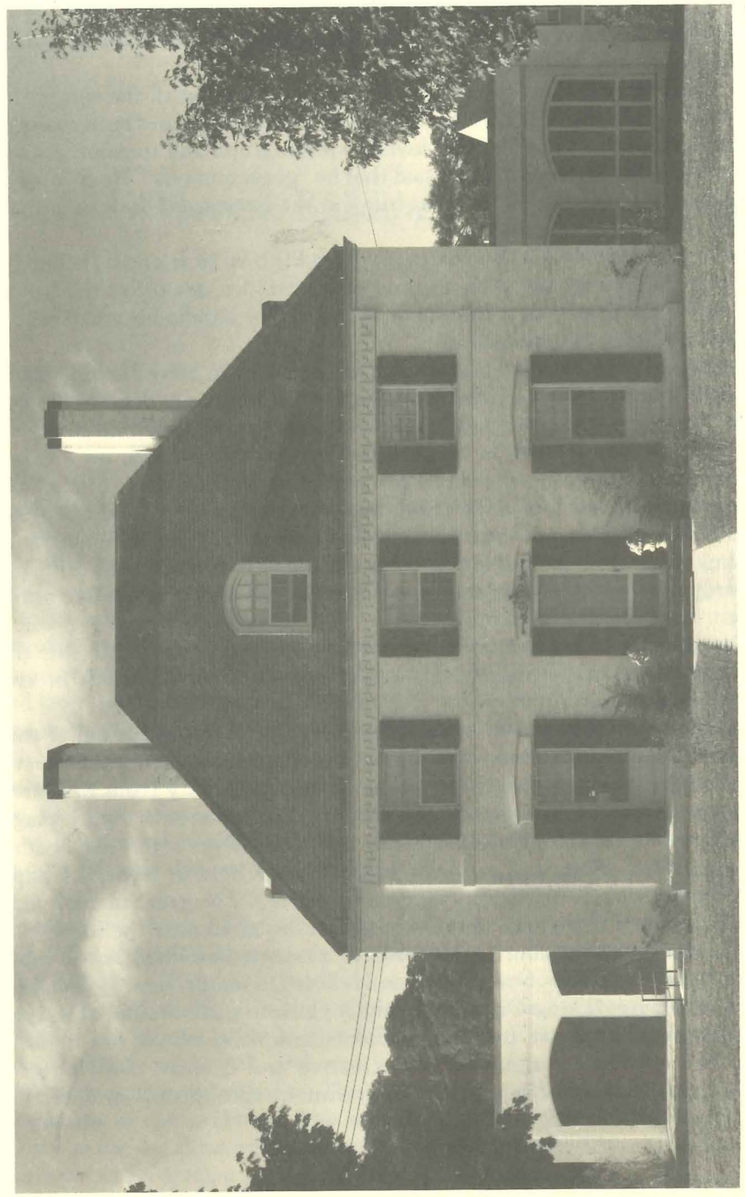
These honors brought Orr the opportunity to design the Robert Taft memorial carillon in Washington, D.C. This commission gave him special satisfaction because through Orr's frequent contacts with the Yale Corporation, of which Taft had been a member since 1936, the two had become close personal friends. The memorial is a fluted shaft standing in a pool of water in which there are thirteen fountains. The shaft is capped by twenty-five bells, which toll at the passing of a member of Congress. It is a strong, simple design of which Orr was justly proud.

Orr's activity with the national A.I.A. and his various government commitments kept him in Washington for extended periods of time and made him a regular New Haven-to-Washington commuter. But he tirelessly kept up a round of civic obligations in New Haven. During World War II he served on a volunteer committee concerned with air raid shelters and received a civil defense commendation ribbon as a thousand-hour volunteer. In 1944 he issued a report of recommendations for the post-war rebuilding of downtown New Haven, basing his report on the conclusions of city planner Maurice Rotival. Orr's report foretold almost exactly what actually happened a decade later, but this is not surprising, as Rotival went to work for the Redevelopment Agency.

Orr served for two years as President of the Connecticut Architectural League and for another two as President of the Connecticut Construction League, and was President of the Architectural Club of New Haven. He served a term as President of the New Haven Lawn Club and was on several housing committees appointed by New Haven's Mayor and on one appointed by the Governor of Connecticut.

Douglas Orr's business acumen was not overlooked by the New Haven financial community. He was elected a Director of the First New Haven Bank in 1931 and served until his death in 1966. This election meant that Orr was no longer a young architect looking in at the financial world from the outside; he was immediately, at a relatively young age, at the heart of New Haven's financial power structure. In 1945 he became a Director of Security Insurance and in 1948 was elected a Director of New Haven Gas Light. In 1946 he was elected a Corporator of the New Haven Savings Bank.

While in early years Douglas Orr and his family maintained a winter *pied à terre* in New Haven, some winters in a suite at the Lawn Club, others in a house on Lincoln Street, their true love was their summer home at Stony Creek, where Douglas Orr spent as much time as possible. He took great pride in his design of the Willoughby Wallace Library there. Later the Orrs built a contemporary



Although overshadowed by major commissions, residential design was the backbone of Orr's practice. The homes he designed were attractive and comfortable. This one was designed for Dwight L. Chamberlain of New Haven.

(with a whisper of colonial) year-round home on the site of their old summer house, halfway up Prospect Hill. The Orrs made winter trips to Arizona and occasional jaunts to Europe.

In his early years, as one of his hobbies, Orr designed all the sets each season for the productions of the Stony Creek summer theater, and built many of them himself. When he had time, Orr loved to photograph and to paint. As a painter, he started with watercolors and said that he "grew into oils." He painted a lovely oil portrait of his wife, Helen, that hung in the hallway of their home. He was a golfer and an avid sailor.

Next to his family, Orr's greatest joy was his host of friends. He liked to have lunch at the Lawn Club with a group of his cronies, tee off at the New Haven Country Club as one of a foursome of friends, or handle his small sailboat in a competitive race on the Sound.

Despite his professional stature and his services to New Haven and to Yale, his alma mater never awarded Douglas Orr an honorary degree. No doubt he would have greatly appreciated one, and certainly he deserved one.

Insofar as New Haven is concerned, Orr could look back on a career that encompassed designing the city's principal hospital facilities, four of its most active churches, each of a different denomination, two of its most prestigious clubs, three of its handsomest office buildings, its YMCA, an important public building and housing of all kinds, from mansions to hundreds of units of public housing. And many of his largest and most impressive projects are not in New Haven; they stand elsewhere.

His career included designing a greater number of projects for Yale than any other architect in its history. He could look back on a wealth of civic and professional honors.

Shortly before his death, in an interview, Orr asserted his belief that New Haven should tie its future to its harbor and plan and build in that direction. He deplored the location of highways that separated the city from its waterfront.

Douglas Orr was not one to give up, but his last months were plagued by illness, and he died on July 29, 1966, just three days after the death of his beloved Helen. Memorial services for both were held in Dwight Chapel, and they were buried in Arlington National Cemetery. The great many buildings in New Haven and elsewhere that Douglas Orr designed over the forty-year span of his career are enduring monuments to a talented architect, even more, to a warm, humane person. Orr's friend and fellow Dissenter, James Wayne Cooper, wrote in tribute, "Doug Orr was the most glorious combination of irrepressible and inconsequential wit, fun and good companionship on the one hand, and on the other he was a serious, critical, creative and devoted contributor to the beauty and pleasure of our urban environment through his architecture."

All photographs courtesy Douglas Orr, Winder and Associates.

'Italian New Haven: Building an Ethnic Identity

by Michael Johnston

Introduction

Ethnic groups have been integral parts of American urban life for generations. We are so accustomed to thinking of Italian,[1] Irish, German and Polish communities that we often take ethnic identities for granted. Italians are Italians, we might surmise, because their ancestors came from Italy; the Irish, because of ties to Ireland, and so on.

In practice, however, things are not so simple. What of a woman with an Irish father and an Italian mother who marries a Pole? Is a boy born to German parents and later adopted by an Irish couple Irish or German? These cases suggest that ethnic identity is not just a legacy of history, but instead involves perceptions, choices and change. Can we say the same for entire ethnic communities?

Today's New Haven Italian community developed out of a host of village and regional identities over several generations. Italian ethnic identity, in New Haven at least, was produced by the actions and choices of people and organizations. History did not make it inevitable.

Italian Immigration: Village Comes to the City

Between 1875 and 1924 as many as 15,000 Italian immigrants arrived in New York City each day. They left home because poverty, crop failure and oppressive taxation were making life in rural Italy intolerable; they came to this country because there were jobs to be had in factories and mines.[2] New Haven, with its growing hardware, clock and gun industries, figured prominently as a destination for Italian immigrants. The 1900 census enumerated 5,262 Italian-born residents in New Haven (the actual total was probably higher). This community made up almost five percent of the city's population and was the tenth-largest concentration of Italians in the United States.[3]

The immigrants came from a nation deeply divided along village and regional lines. Garibaldi's *risorgimento* struggle was nearing military success as the migration began, but a feudal mosaic of narrow loyalties was still a social fact of life. These divisions and loyalties, one interview subject explained, grew out of age-old conflicts and conquests:

> "The history of Italy is all jumbled up, because Italy was always being taken over by somebody. There were the Goths, Visigoths, the Huns, the Gauls, and the like. They came, and brought their customs, their languages, their attitudes. And so you can visualize . . . how two little towns, only three or three and a half miles apart, would have entirely different backgrounds, because one was founded by the Gauls, and the other was founded by the Huns. They'd always have their rivalries, and they'd talk differently. This is throughout Italy—you can't describe it, how jumbled up it is. . . . People say, "I like Italian cuisine," and I say, "Which one?" There are probably two thousand Italian cuisines. Where I lived and where [my wife's] mother came from were only fifteen miles apart. And we ate practically the same stuff, and yet some of the ingredients and some of the main dishes were called [by] different names."

Modern communications may have homogenized rural Italian society somewhat in recent years, but for immigrants coming to New Haven in the 1880s and 1890s identities and loyalties were defined in terms of a village or region. Few identified strongly with the abstract geographical area known to others as Italy.

These loyalties were known as *campanilismo.* Tradition had it that only those who lived within earshot of a village's *campanile* (belltower) were *paesane.* Others were outsiders, to be approached only with caution. People in all parts of the nation had their local ties, but campanilismo was strongest in southern Italy, whence came most of New Haven's Italian immigrants. There, poverty and isolation helped preserve local loyalties and suspicions of others. Campanilismo was also reinforced by language: the "Italian" word for witch is *maga,* but a Neapolitan might say *iannara,* and a Sicilian *donna di fuora.* The "Italian" word for onion, *cipolla,* was pronounced *cipulli* and *cipudda* in two Sicilian towns only a few miles apart.[4]

Village and regional identities were reproduced in New Haven not by a lingering consciousness of Goth and Visigoth conquests, but by the mechanisms of migration and settlement. Families would often make the crossing one member at a time, sending money back to finance other members' trips. Frequently the success of one family would persuade neighbors to emigrate as well. These new arrivals would often seek out fellow villagers already in New Haven and

ultimately settle near them. Consequently it was not at all unusual for a cluster of immigrants from one Italian village to gather on one street in New Haven, perhaps even working for the same employer. Thus, while the *New Haven Register* of February 3, 1872, made reference to Oak Street as "the Italian section of the city,"[5] there were developing at that time *three* "Italian" communities, each containing many smaller cluster village groups. Two of these districts were on the Hill, and the third in Wooster Square.

The Wooster Square community was south Italian in origin and largest of the three. Many residents came from Salerno and worked at the Candee Rubber Company or at Sargent's Hardware works.[6] The city's first Italian Catholic Church—St. Michael's—was established on Wooster Place in 1890, reflecting that neighborhood's role as focal point for Italian New Haven. But the two Hill communities were active and diverse as well. The larger developed around Oak Street and the lower Hill, one of the city's most run-down areas. Here a predominantly south Italian population, including many immigrants from Avellino, Benevento and Caserta, mingled with the last of the Irish immigrants and the first of the east European Jews. Central and north Italians lived in a smaller district in what was then an outer section of the Hill. Many residents were Marchigiani. Although not affluent by any means, this neighborhood was somewhat better off than the others, having the largest shares of skilled workers and homeowners.

The meaning of campanilismo in daily life, of course, varied from person to person. For a few, it meant very little; for others, suspicions ran deep. As late as the 1930s, Williams[7] reports, many parents were reluctant to let their sons leave home for Civilian Conservation Corps work, for fear they would meet and marry girls from other parts of Italy. People interviewed in New Haven recalled intergroup relationships ranging from mutual appreciation to intense dislike. Some examples:

> *A central Italian*
> "You know, there's a difference in the way [southern Italians] act, the way they talk . . . even now, in this day and age. In Italy, if you're up in Milano, and you see a couple of fellows walking down the street . . . you know right away if they're from the south. There's something about them—they use their hands a heck of a lot more when they talk. And that's the stereotype of all Italians as far as the American people go. There is definitely a distinction. [South Italians] are not any better or any worse, but there's a distinction. . . ."
>
> Asked if he recalled frictions between various regional groups as he grew up in New Haven, the same individual replied, "Oh, yes, there was no question about it. It didn't go as far as creating a conflict which could turn into hatred. . . . What they lack in manners and politeness,

they make up in their hearts—they're very warm, very hospitable."

A north Italian:
"As the years go by, you tend to forget those things. But in those days [pre-1930] people had just come from Italy, and the north Italians would go with their friends, the south Italians would go with theirs, and you'd get a dividing line down the middle. One would call the other stupid, and so on. They weren't that at all, but that's the way [people] felt in those days."

A central Italian:
"We were brought up, in our family, [so that] if we mentioned a south Italian, they'd say, 'Don't you *dare* go out with a south Italian. . . .' They didn't want that intermarriage. But the funny part of it was, most of them *did* intermarry."

A south Italian mentioned that the situation was not so much a conflict as it was very little relationship at all, a fact augmented by the rough geographical separation of the three Italian neighborhoods.

Thus for many years, when collective action was in order it came from village or regional constituencies, and not out of a general Italian-American movement. Nowhere, in fact, was campanilismo more vividly reflected than in community organizational life. New Haven Italians were great organizers; shared village identities, dialect and problems, along with residential clustering, all contributed to the formation of dozens of clubs and societies. Many were founded by a handful of people from a single part of Italy, and reflected these identities in their names: Societa Regionale Marchigiana, Circolo Stabiese, the Beneventano Society, and Circolo San Carlino are just a few examples.[8] Others took saints' names, but these too had regional connotations, since even the smallest Italian villages have patron saints. Societa Santa Maddelena, for example, "was named for the patroness of the little town of Atrani, near Naples."[9] "One little village of no more than six or seven hundred people had about fifty people move to one street on the Hill," I was told. "One of the first things they did was start a club." By 1930, over eighty clubs were active, with an estimated combined membership of more than ten thousand.[10]

These organizations offered good times, help in times of trouble, routine services such as assistance in reading and writing letters and a tie to the old home region. Formation of village-based clubs began in the 1870s and continued until the end of mass immigration in the 1920s.

Common roots in a place others called "Italy," then, did not automatically produce an Italian-American ethnic identity. For the first two generations, in fact, village and regional identities were much more important to most of the immigrants than any common Italian concerns. Yet today a large and active Italian community lives and works in New Haven with few serious internal divisions. How did this more general ethnic identity develop?

The Development of Italian-American Identity

Italian-American ethnic identity was constructed out of the perceptions and choices of real people; it was not an inevitable part of ethnicity. Three factors were involved in its formation: the disruptive effects of emigration and resettlement, generalizing forces coming from outside the Italian community, and unifying forces emerging from within.

Emigration tore people out of accustomed social situations and confronted them with new challenges. Leaving a home where generations of one's family had been raised, making the dangerous ocean crossing, and starting a new life in a strange place can be a shattering experience:

> Emigration took . . . people out of traditional, accustomed environments and replanted them in strange ground, among strangers, where strange manners prevailed. The customary modes of behavior were no longer adequate, for the problems of life were new and different. With old ties snapped men faced the enormous compulsion of working out new relationships, new meanings to their lives, often under harsh and hostile circumstances.[11]

"Working out new meanings" meant making choices. Where to live, how to earn a livelihood, whom to turn to in time of need—all of these questions had been long since answered by history and custom in the Italian countryside. But in New Haven new answers had to be found. The family and the logic of campanilismo provided some guides, and as noted, early efforts at collective action took place along village and regional lines. But the migration experience and the new problems of life transcended the old divisions, and the political and economic forces perpetuating campanilismo had, for the most part, been left back in Italy.

Emigration and resettlement, then, not only shattered old and familiar ways of life; they freed people (indeed, even *compelled* them) to construct new social arrangements. But emigration did not in itself determine the character of those new arrangements. To understand the formation of new ethnic identities, we must examine generalizing forces originating both within and without Italian New Haven.

The attitudes and activities of outsiders played a major role in the development of wider ethnic identities. As is frequently the case when indigenous populations encounter groups of unfamiliar newcomers,[12] New Haveners tended to see much more in common among the Italian regional communities than did the Italians themselves. We have already noted the *New Haven Register's*

early reference to an "Italian section of the city" at a time when such a characterization would have meant little to its inhabitants. We should also recall the observation of one of the interview subjects quoted above that outsiders tended to apply a south-Italian stereotype to all who came from Italy. Language, too, played a role: while nuances of dialect and pronunciation were important to immigrants from various regions of Italy, the difference between Italian and English was much greater, and contributed to outsiders' tendencies to see a single, unified Italian community.

Like other newcomers to American cities, the Italians encountered prejudice and discrimination. One man discussed the experiences of his youth:

> "We never went anywhere that we weren't . . . called Guineas, called Wops, and all that sort of thing. We got to the point that we didn't want to go to school. We were maligned, we were beaten, we were insulted, we were segregated. . . .

Such discrimination can do much to generalize ethnic identities, for here immigrants from all parts of Italy were being treated as Italians, like it or not. Problems of job discrimination also were common to the regional communities. Further, any response to these problems would be seen by outsiders as an *Italian* response. However they defined their own ethnic identities, people who were constantly being treated as Italians had to become more aware of the needs and problems of people from other villages and regions.

If the attitudes of outsiders compelled one sort of recognition of an Italian identity, the overtures of the local Republican Party provided some positive inducements for cooperation among the regional constituencies. The local GOP, in the early 1900s, was having increasing trouble competing with the Democrats and their strong Irish backing. Their response was to seek Italian support.

Before about 1905, few New Haven Italians could vote, due to an 1897 amendment to the Connecticut Constitution imposing English literacy requirements upon the franchise.[13] Those who could vote usually were Democrats, perhaps because Italians were moving into neighborhoods which had long since been made Democratic strongholds by the Irish. An Italian entering neighborhood politics usually encountered Irish-Democratic leadership, organizations and (occasionally) small favors. Italians too had more in common with the Irish than with the Yankees, who dominated the pre-1900 GOP, since they shared and contended for the same sorts of neighborhoods, churches, schools and jobs. But Irish strength in the Democratic Party meant that Italians were not a powerful independent political force. Miller notes that while several Italians were elected to public office, their victories were due more to the functional needs of government than to Italian political clout. For example, language differences

created an increasing need for intermediaries between Italian neighborhoods and American laws; hence, at least one Italian was elected Justice of the Peace in every election after 1888.[14]

Louis and Isaac Ullman, sons of German Jewish immigrants and co-owners of a corset factory, took over the local Republican Party shortly before 1900. The strength of the Irish Democrats, and the growing (if perhaps unenthusiastic) support they received from Italians, must have made it clear to the Ullmans that they could not compete as a Yankee party in an immigrant city. Accordingly, they set out to capitalize on Italian discontents within the Democratic Party:

> The Ullman brothers realized that the large and hitherto passive Italian population was an untapped source of potential Republicans. They set out to capture the Italians, using the familiar techniques of ethnic politics. They helped them take out citizenship papers, registered them as voters, found them jobs, used their considerable influence to smooth over administrative and legal difficulties, subsidized Italian-American fraternal and political clubs, and so on.[15]

The Republican initiative did not erase all internal divisions in Italian New Haven overnight; indeed, Wolfinger characterized the ensuing two-party competition for Italian support as a "stand-off."[16] Still, Italians overall became much more sympathetic to the Republicans than their immigrant origins or economic status would suggest. Dahl shows that between 1910 and 1931, wards with heavy Italian populations gave GOP candidates much more support than did Irish wards, with Wooster Square frequently returning Republican majorities.[17] Competition for Italian support produced more Italian names on the ballot. Wooster Square elected Italians of both parties to the Board of Aldermen after 1906. The area north of Wooster Square began electing Italian aldermen in 1920.[18]

Again, immigrants and their descendants from all parts of Italy were being approached as Italians; unlike the case of stereotypes, however, there were rewards to be won for recognizing and acting upon a common set of Italian-American concerns. These rewards—the favors, jobs and business relationships which then as now were coin of the realm in New Haven politics—were modest in scale. But they were important to a poor community and were significant inducements to cooperation under an Italian-American banner.

The actions of outsiders, then, were integral to the construction of more general ethnic identities out of the fragmentation of campanilismo. What kinds of decisions and initiatives were undertaken by the Italians themselves?

The passage of time and generations, of course, played a major role in the development of new community identities. Young people born in New Haven learned of the old home regions and customs from parents, but few had any

direct contact with ancestral villages. The perceptions of campanilismo were less immediate to succeeding generations as a result. But organizations and community leaders also helped break down the old internal divisions and construct new patterns of activity and identification. We should not take the latter phase for granted, for while a number of processes served to break down campanilismo in Italian New Haven, it was by no means inevitable that any one new identity would take its place. Two sorts of effort are of particular note in this regard: the development of mutual-aid organizations, and later the activities of an Italian-American business and professional class.

Mutual-aid societies were a part of life in many immigrant communities. Social Security and public health and welfare programs were unknown, while common needs were great. Hence dozens of small organizations were formed to provide mutual aid to members in times of fire, sickness or death. Many small social clubs in Italian New Haven began to offer such benefits in the 1880s. Sometimes new organizations were formed expressly for mutual-aid purposes, while other clubs simply added benefits to existing activities. Benefit programs were modest in scope but well organized. Dues might be accumulated to maintain a benefits fund which would allow payments at death (usually around $50, rarely more than $100). Another common means of funding was an equal assessment of each member upon the death of any other. For a time, each member of the Societa di Mutuo Soccorso Settentrionale Italiana (hereafter called the "Settentrionale") paid $3 toward a $50 payment to the bereaved family.[19] The significance of these payments should not be underestimated. Not only was a funeral a major expense for a poor family; it was also an occasion of religious and symbolic importance. Other than christening and marriage, it was perhaps the only occasion on which a poor person could command ceremony and respect. Many members joined neighborhood clubs primarily for these benefits.

Illness, too, was a major concern. Most families could not afford medical care in the best of times, and a sick wage-earner could mean financial disaster. The Settentrionale, for example, provided a sickness stipend of $10 per week for ten weeks, $8 for each of the next ten weeks, and $5 per week thereafter.[20] Even large organizations were threatened with depletion of funds, so recipients were strictly supervised. An Italian-American doctor recalled:

> "When I started my practice, [the Settentrionale] used to have a health plan. It was a meager one; if you were proven to be sick, I had to sign your certificate each week. They used to have a visitor who'd come to see you every week to see that you weren't sloughing off. You couldn't leave the house—you had to be sick. You didn't necessarily have to be in bed, but you had to be there when the visitor came. You'd get so much a week. I used to sign hundreds of these papers for the Settentrionale Club, the Marchigiani Club, and the Societa di Norte Italia. [In other neighborhoods] they had the Circolo Sannio, the [Societa] Santa Maria Maddelena, and all of those people had their own [mutual-aid] groups."

A member of another organization recalled:

> "If you were sick, you couldn't do a *thing*. If they caught you making breakfast, or going to the sink for something, they wouldn't pay you. When you were sick, you were sick. They'd send someone from the club over to visit, to check on you now and then to make sure you were sick."

These restrictions were necessary to protect an organization's hard-won aid funds. Still, mutual-aid programs were a major source of help for many Italian families, and they helped neighborhood organizations to grow.

Mutual-aid groups helped to meld the old village and regional constituencies into a larger Italian-American community. Organizations bring people together into patterns of coordinated activity, and for mutual-aid societies, which had to finance benefits out of the limited resources of their own communities, a large and growing membership meant that larger, more reliable payments could be offered, perhaps even at less cost per member.

Consequently mutual-aid organizations, often founded by village-oriented communities, tended over time to develop broader membership bases. As early as 1884, for example, La Fratellanza Italiana Benevolent Society began offering aid to immigrants from several sections of southern Italy.[21] Sometimes organizations representing neighboring parts of Italy would merge in order to enhance their mutual-aid capabilities; others, such as the Settentrionale (open to all of north-Italian extraction from its inception) deliberately sought out a large membership base. Through these organizations people got to know Italians from other regions as people with similar hopes and troubles and began to work with them on common projects. Social activities were also a part of organizational life, and these affected the attitudes of young people in particular:

> "When we were little, every Saturday night the Settentrionale had dances, and our fathers would take us. And we did meet a lot of other Italian people who were not [from our region]. That's when we started to know a few other Italians."

Campanilismo did not disappear immediately; this interview subject was describing events during the 1930s, fifty years, and almost three generations, after Italians began to arrive in New Haven in great numbers. But as mutual-aid efforts grew, and as they drew upon ever-wider constituencies, steps were being made toward a new community identity.

The emergence of an Italian-American business-professional class hastened the process. Italian New Haven was anything but affluent in the 1930s; the Depression, in fact, hit Italians and their small businesses harder than it did many other communities.[22] Still, a small business-and-professional community was growing in importance. Sociologist Jerome K. Myers gathered data on Italians' occupations in New Haven, comparing the percentage of Italians in various job categories to their percentage of the total city population, over a number of years. He sought to find out how well represented the Italians were at various levels of the social structure. In 1910, Myers' data show, Italians held only 11 percent of the number of professional jobs which one might expect them to hold, based on their share of the city population. By 1920, however, the percentage had risen to 27 percent; and in 1930, it was 40 percent.[23] Italians were still under-represented in the ranks of professionals in the 1930s. But those needing the services of a doctor or lawyer were increasingly able to turn to a member of their own community.

Professionals and businessmen served the purpose of internal unification through their day-to-day activities. Their attainment of advanced academic degrees and commercial success was a matter of justified community pride. They also met pressing needs in those areas: a person whose English was uncertain, for example, could turn to an understanding doctor or lawyer for help. These service relationships extended across the old village and regional boundaries, which were weakening to some degree anyway. Dealing with a doctor who spoke a different Italian dialect was much easier than going to one who spoke no Italian at all:

> "Everyone would go to the same doctor. . . . He had his office on Howard Avenue. It seemed like all the Italians would go to this same doctor. That's only natural—in those days, the only one they could understand was an Italian doctor. He had all of us Marchigiani [as patients]. He was a south Italian. But whenever people were sick they'd go to him. He was someone they could relate to."

Many of the Italian professionals retained a commitment to their communities, opening offices in or near their homes. Some would make a point of helping out people who could pay little or nothing. Attorney George Di Cenzo was an example. Well known on the Hill because his mother had been a popular midwife (in a sense, developing a professional clientele of her own), Di Cenzo opened offices on Howard Avenue and was easily accessible:

> "His policy was that his door was open for anyone . . . he helped lots of people. He always lived in the Hill area, and was familiar with lots of families. Many people who weren't able to speak English would go to him because he could speak both languages. . . . He was in constant touch with people. He wasn't one of those people who was always behind a desk, and you just can't get to them. He was accessible to everyone."

Di Cenzo used his legal talents to help community organizations with legal and financial problems, was active in school, church and charity efforts, and was at least an honorary member of dozens of Italian organizations. Other business and professional figures made similar contributions to community life.

Like the self-help organizations, the business and professional men of Italian New Haven eased the community's internal divisions by making interaction and interdependence among Italians of all regions a fact of daily life. The Amity Club—a social and service organization for Italian business and professional men—helped to bring this emerging class together. William Celentano, a mortician, took part in the Club's work, along with Di Cenzo. Later, they went on to win landmark political victories: Celentano's Republican mayoral nomination in 1939, and his eventual victory in 1945, marked a watershed, demonstrating the rewards and legitimacy of working together under an Italian-American banner.[24] His candidacies produced a cooperative Italian response that would have been unthinkable fifty years before.

Conclusions

The development of a large, active Italian-American ethnic community in New Haven should not be taken for granted. When Italian immigrants began to arrive in the late nineteenth century, their loyalties were to small parts of Italy, and divisions were deep among many village and regional groupings. Neither history nor some basic dynamic of ethnicity made the change in ethnic identity inevitable. Instead, it was the actions of people and organizations, both within and without the community, which built up a wider ethnic identity. The process involved patience, careful choices, and skillful leadership.

At the outset we raised the hypothetical example of a woman with an Irish father and an Italian mother who marries a Pole: what ethnic identity, if any, does she have? The answer rests in her own perceptions and choices, and not with history or the opinions of others alone. So it is with entire ethnic communities as well. Ethnicity's boundaries, definitions, and significance can change as circumstances or choices may direct them.

If this is so, then to regard a city such as New Haven simply as a "melting pot," or to portray ethnicity's survival as evidence of its rigidity (and not of its flexibility)[25] is to do both the city and its ethnic communities an injustice. A large and harmonious Italian community did not just happen; it was built by real people. In this sense, ethnicity changed, but did not "melt" away. But that community also still preserves the old village and regional roots in a number of active social and service organizations. So the development of ethnic identities will probably

never be "complete." For a long time, ethnicity has provided us with a set of convenient, if static and arbitrary, categories into which we sort people, their tastes, and their opinions. Perhaps we should pay more attention to ethnicity as a way in which people seek to make sense of themselves and their experiences. If we do, we will find New Haven's ethnic communities much more complex and fascinating than we may have expected, and our understanding of them will be richer and more complete.

NOTES

1. At times in this article we will use terms such as "Italian" and "Irish" to refer to people and communities who are in truth "Italian-American" or "Irish-American." This is done for the sake of brevity only, and in no way is meant to imply that "Italians" or any other ethnic group are not Americans and integral parts of New Haven life.

2. Eliot Lord, J.J.D. Trenor, and S.J. Barrows, *The Italian in America* (New York: Buck Publishers, 1905), pp. 49-60; Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), pp. 182ff; Andrew F. Rolle, *The American Italians: The History and Culture* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 1972), pp. 19-24.

3. Lord, *et. al.*, p. 8.

4. Phyllis H. Williams, *South Italian Folkways in Europe and America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), p. 10.

5. Quoted in Morty Miller, "New Haven: The Italian Community" (Yale University, Department of History, 1969, mimeo), p. 10.

6. Samuel Koenig, *Immigrant Settlements in Connecticut: Their Growth and Characteristics* (Hartford: WPA Writers' Project, 1938), pp. 26-28; Miller, pp. 54-58.

7. Williams, pp. 34-35.

8. Miller, p. 79.

9. Williams, p. 138.

10. Miller, p. 25.

11. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 2nd enl. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1973), p. 5.

12. Donald L. Horowitz, "Ethnic Identity," in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 131.

13. Miller, pp. 86-87.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

15. Raymond E. Wolfinger, "The Development and Persistence of Ethnic Voting," *American Political Science Review* 59:4 (December, 1965), p. 900.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 901.

17. Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 47-48.

18. Miller, pp. 92-93.

19. Societa di Mutuo Soccorso Settentrionale Italiana, By-laws, 1927. (Archives, New Haven Colony Historical Society).

20. *Ibid.*

21. Alberto Cupelli, "The Italian-American in Old New Haven" (Branford, Connecticut, 1972), p. 11.

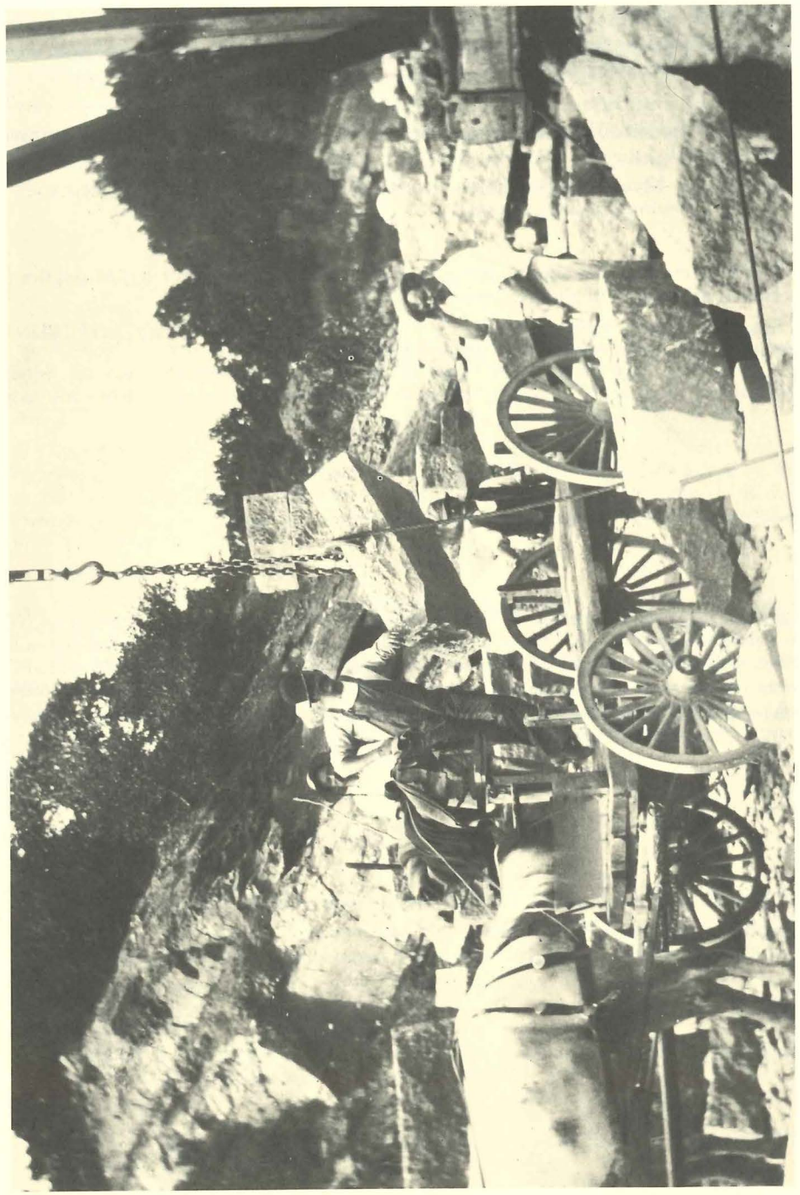
22. Jerome K. Myers, "Assimilation to the Ecological and Social Systems of a Community," *American Sociological Review* 15:3 (June 1950), Table III, p. 370.

23. *Ibid.*

24. A full account of the significance of Celentano's candidacies for Italian politics in New Haven appears in Wolfinger, *op. cit.*

25. See, for example, Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), *passim*.

I would like to acknowledge gratefully the valuable advice and assistance provided by the staff of the New Haven Colony Historical Society. I further wish to thank once again all those people who took part in the interviews connected with this article and my more general research into New Haven ethnic politics. Since the interviews involved recollections of their own and others' activities, all interview subjects were guaranteed anonymity and will not be named here. All, however, provided useful and fascinating recollections of the development of the city's ethnic communities.



Operations at Walter J. Connor's quarry. (NHCHS photo)

The Quarry Business in Fair Haven

by Deb Townshend

Fair Haven, on the banks of the Quinnipiac River, was noted chiefly for its oyster business and for shipbuilding in the nineteenth century, but concurrent with these renowned trades was another local industry that enjoyed considerable success—sandstone quarrying.

These three industries, plus some farming, accounted for the healthy economic condition of Fair Haven in those days. As Professor James S. Dana of Yale University commented in 1891: "Now, through its oyster trade, sandstone quarries and shipbuilding the settlement has become the largest of the villages around the bay."[1]

Oystering and shipbuilding have been featured in many articles, but not much has been written or is known about the sandstone business of yesteryear. The once-active quarries on the sharp ridge overlooking the river on the east side (called the Heights) have long since closed down. The former owners and workmen have gone to their eternal rest. No one living today is old enough to remember the heyday of Fair Haven quarrying; however, residents of the Heights are well aware that the whole overgrown area between Russell and Lexington Streets from East Grand Avenue almost to I-95 is pockmarked with abandoned quarries. The moss-covered sandstone walls of the jagged ravines still show the longitudinal grooves where the rock was drilled and blasted apart.

Another remnant of the past are streets named after some of the people involved in the quarry business: Lancraft, Burwell and Brown. Most prominently associated with quarrying in the early days was the large Lancraft tribe. Later on, the Blakeslee family took the forefront in the operation.

Even more pertinent testimony than the written word or hearsay to the erstwhile thriving quarry business are the many extant buildings, foundations, walls and abutments in New Haven that were constructed of the red East Haven

stone (Fair Haven belonged to East Haven until 1881). If you drive around town with your eyes trained to notice structures of sandstone, you will find that many of the old churches were built of it, as were also quite a few of Yale University's halls.

The use of sandstone goes back to the 1600s, when the first settlers of New Haven carved grave-markers of the soft material. Some of these doleful stones with their death-head designs can still be seen, leaning against the inside walls of the Grove Street Cemetery. But the colonists didn't utilize the sandstone for building purposes—perhaps because there was plenty of wood at hand, and the forests had to be cut down anyway so that fields could be planted. Then, too, the sandstone ridge to the east of New Haven was three miles away, reached only by cart over sketchy paths and via a small ferry over the Quinnipiac River.

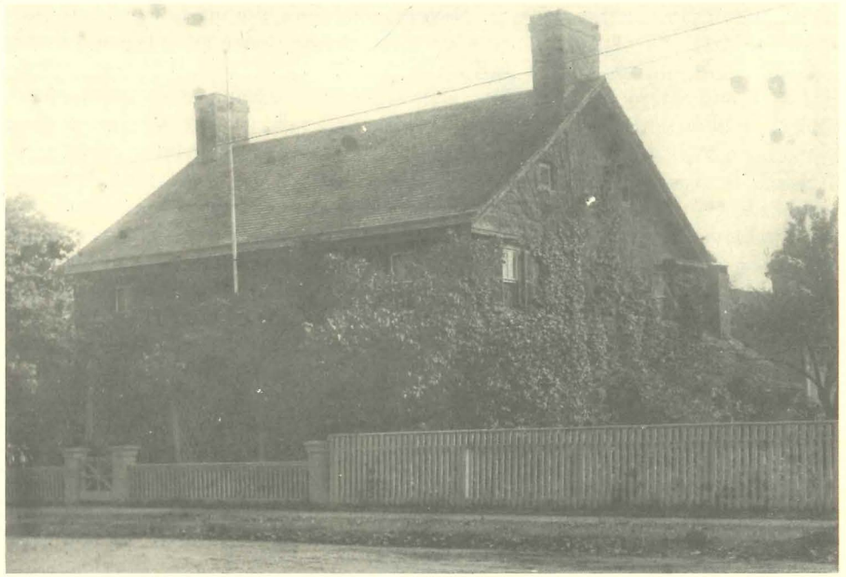
Another important factor was black powder. Largely imported from abroad, it was an expensive but necessary commodity for the colonists. The precious powder was needed far more in their guns for self-defense and for the procurement of game than for large-scale blasting operations to loosen sandstone. By the time of the Revolution, a few American artisans were making some acceptable black powder, but ninety percent was still being shipped from France.

However, in 1767 one man decided he wanted a house of sandstone regardless of the expenditures of money, time and labor. Jehiel Forbes, a prosperous shipbuilder, engaged a fellow East Havener and master craftsman by the name of George Lancraft (1724-1807) to tackle the job. And so the first sandstone structure in the New Haven area, as far as is known, was built beside the winding road that led to the lower ferry.

Lancraft, fresh from Holland, chiseled the date over the front doorway—as was the custom in his native land—where it can still be seen. He married a local girl, Sarah Jocelin, fathered eight children and thus became the progenitor of the prolific Lancraft families who made their homes along the Quinnipiac River in Fair Haven East.

In 1772, when the Congregationalists of East Haven voted to erect a third meeting house, this time of stone, they turned naturally to the experienced mason in their midst, George Lancraft. The villagers believed that a stone church would save them money because they had stone available (and perhaps donated) from the Lancraft quarry less than two miles west of the proposed site at Thompson's corner. They also had "lime and teams and laborers enough to do the work,"[2] the laborers being the church members.

Lancraft was, at the time of this building, in the prime of life and at the height of his activity, energy and good judgment. "He was the only skilled workman employed in its [the church's] erection and that he was a perfect master of his business, in every particular, a glance at the structure . . . is positive evidence. He had no foreman to whom he could entrust any part of the work. . . . Every stone must be measured by his rule and placed by his level, under his immediate



An old photograph of the Jehiel Forbes house, 153 Forbes Avenue.

eye. At this early date everything had to be done by hand. There were no dummy engines to do the hoisting of materials and swing the heavy stones into place."[3]

Public worship began in the new sanctuary in September, 1774 and has continued ever since in what has become known as "The Old Stone Church." Indeed, it is the second oldest in New England.

Before the Revolution, the Lancraft quarries on the high ridge above the river were the first and only ones. The area was then referred to as Dragon Woods because of the "dragon-like" seals that had been sighted sunning themselves on the banks of the river in former days. The wild terrain of the quarries provided safety for a number of colonists when British troops landed on the east shore of the harbor on July 5, 1779, as reported here by Charles Hervey Townshend: "Mr. Tuttle had with his neighbors in the morning marched to meet the foe, but being satisfied the day was lost returned home and started with a cart load of household effects for the quarry east of the upper ferry where lived an Englishman, William Day, who had lately married Abigail Woodward, grand-niece of Rev. John Woodward."[4]

That same day, the Forbes house was put to the torch by the British. Its wooden interior was gutted, but its stout sandstone walls escaped destruction. Mr. Forbes and his sons reconstructed the inside later that summer. This house

could be considered the oldest in New Haven, since the majority of it is older than the majority of the Pardee-Morris fieldstone house (also burned by the British), reputedly the oldest in the city.

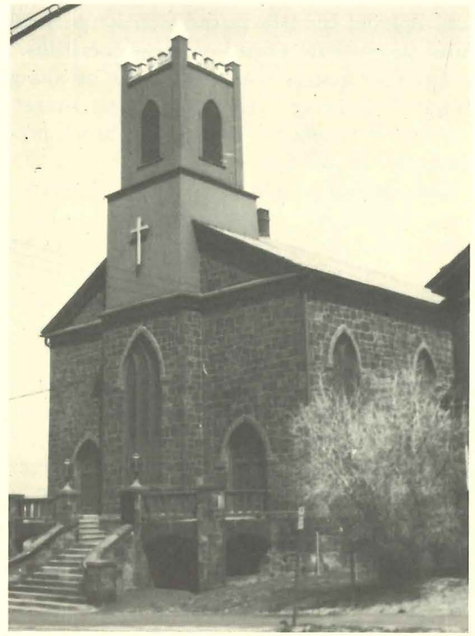
The Englishman, William Day, was apparently employed at the Lancraft quarry. His daughter Mary married George Lancraft, Jr. in 1797, and to them were born William T. Lancraft, Nathaniel, Lucius, Sarah, Maria, Almira and Abigail. It was William (1801-1876) who carried on the family business, establishing a name for himself as a quarryman and contractor known not only in New Haven but also in other cities. His obituary stated that he "was engaged for upwards of fifty years in furnishing stone from the quarries in Fair Haven of which he was the proprietor for many years."[5] A quiet and unassuming man, an upright, useful and respected citizen, William was one of the first members of the Congregational Church, which then stood on the present site of Strong School.

In the years after the Revolution, other quarries were opened up, prompting the comment from historian John W. Barber that "There is a large amount of excellent stone for building and other purposes found in the village [Fair Haven] and the getting it out during the spring and summer season receives considerable and increasing attention. In 1835, there were quarried by different companies 270,000 solid feet."[6] In a real estate advertisement of the same period, some saleable land in Fair Haven was cited as near the supply of "inexhaustible quarries of red sandstone—a cheap and most excellent material and one almost exclusively used here for building purposes."

Getting enough powder wasn't a problem anymore, because a French immigrant, Irénée du Pont, had been manufacturing a superior grade since 1804 in Wilmington, Delaware, on the banks of the Brandywine River. His company's products were sent inland via Conestoga wagons and up the coast on schooners to such ports as New Haven. The increasing availability of black powder allowed American enterprise to surge forward in coal and gold mining, road and canal building and quarrying.

Ambitious Connecticut Yankees, wanting to capitalize on the blossoming powder market, established mills in 1835 in Scitico on the Scantic River. Allen A. Denslow of New Haven and Allen Loomis of Suffield, founders of Loomis & Company, were soon joined by Colonel Augustus Hazard, who eight years later bought the business, organized it as the Hazard Powder Company and developed it into an operation covering four hundred acres. The company was considered one of the big three in powder-making in the mid 1800s, barreling as much as twelve tons daily, worth more than one million dollars annually. Colonel Hazard was honored when the western part of town was sectioned off and named for him: Hazardville.

The Fair Haven quarrymen were quick to take advantage of this closer source, especially since the Hazard Powder Company had built a brick powder house



St. James Episcopal Church, East Grand Avenue, dedicated in 1845.

just under the rim of the jagged sandstone heights. An 1859 map identifies the position of this storage house, verified by Mr. and Mrs. John E. Barker, the present owners of what is now 11 Eldridge Street. Mrs. Barker, whose family, the Eldridges, have lived in the remodeled building for four generations, related the tradition of how in the early days the powder was hauled by double teams of horses from the powder plant at Hazardville to Enfield, where it was loaded onto barges going down the Connecticut River. (Railroads at first refused to carry the dangerous cargo.)

"The barges arriving in Fair Haven were docked on the east side of the Quinnipiac River," Mrs. Barker said, "and the heavy powder kegs were shifted to oxen-drawn sledges. The procession then made its slow, careful way up the hill to the powder house where the twenty-five pound casks were stored for future use at the quarries."

It is difficult to pinpoint the various quarries in Fair Haven as to location or former ownership because of the scant records, but the Reverend Daniel Haven in his *History of East Haven* (1874) mentions a quarry "a few rods east from the residence of the Hon. Charles Ives on the south side of the highway [top of Clifton Street]." Material for the construction of the Old Stone Church in East Haven, he stated, was taken partly from here and "partly from a quarry which

was opened for this purpose in what is called the Vineyard. No stone are [*sic*] now taken from either of these localities."

Another quarry was opened up "on the grounds recently owned by the Hon. James F. Babcock" (east of Summit Street near East Grand Avenue) and still another between the Ives and Babcock properties, belonging to and worked by Jonathan Hunt, Esq.

On the north side of East Grand Avenue was a quarry owned by a farmer, Isaac Brown. According to former Fair Havener Mrs. Frederick R. Brown, Isaac gave a portion of his land for the site of St. James Episcopal Church as well as stone from his quarry. Dedicated in 1845, this beautifully symmetrical sanctuary of sandstone still graces what was once called Christian Hill. Opposite it stands Pilgrim Congregational Church, erected on a firm foundation of the same native rock.

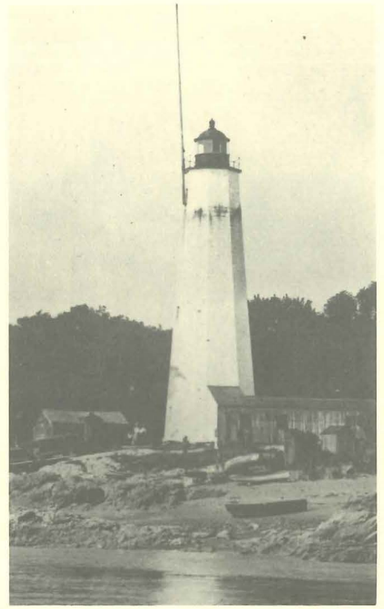
Pre-dating these Fair Haven edifices and currently celebrating its 150th anniversary is St. Paul's Episcopal Church (1829) at Chapel and Olive Streets, said to have been constructed of the East Haven sandstone. Sacred Heart R.C. Church (1851), originally the South Reformed Congregational Church, on the corner of Columbus and Liberty, might well have been built of the popular sandstone blocks, which would have been conveniently barged from the Quinnipiac River across to the west shore and transferred to carts for the trip up the hill. At any rate, the architect's name was appropriate: Sidney Mason Stone.

The thrifty quarries produced sandstone blocks for a variety of uses other than churches: wharf and building foundations, pier and railroad abutments, and retaining walls. The first bridge over the Quinnipiac was supported with thick sandstone abutments, and the city's first planned burial ground, Grove Street Cemetery, was walled in with the motley-toned sandstone blocks. The imposing Egyptian-style gateway was built the same year, in 1845.

In 1840, a ninety-foot lighthouse was erected on the eastern tip of the inner harbor at the insistence of the numerous shipmasters, seacaptains and merchants in New Haven's active port, who wanted a higher landfall beacon to replace the original wooden structure. Fashioned of large, smooth sandstone blocks from East Haven and painted white, the old structure is now a blind but picturesque sentinel.

For forty-two years (1852-1894) the Shore Line Railroad ran across the Quinnipiac River just north of the Grand Avenue Bridge, on a sandstone-supported bridge. When the railroad was rerouted, the stone blocks were removed and put to good use as the foundation for the Yale Boathouse off Forbes Avenue, so it is said.

While the rugged sandstone gave churches an image of permanence and proved eminently suitable for underpinnings, not many people chose the material for their homes. Even the many Lancraft houses were built of wood. However, Captain Edwin Thompson, a coaster and oyster dealer, in 1840



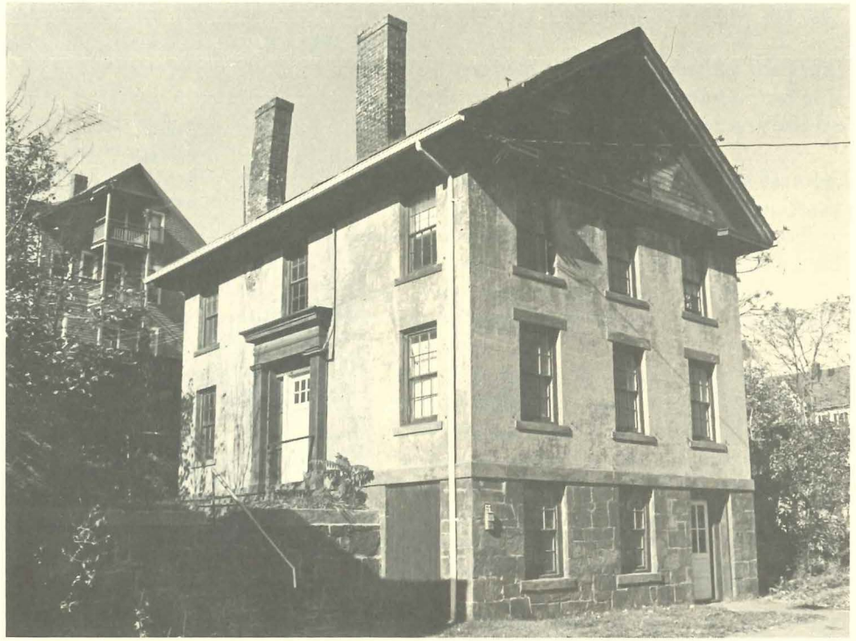
The lighthouse in New Haven Harbor, built in 1840. (NHCHS photo)

elected to build his three-story house of sandstone. It can still be seen at 66 South Front Street, facing the Quinnipiac River.

Another admirer of the richly hued stone, John Naylor of East Haven, took out a mortgage of $600 in 1858 and proceeded to erect his dwelling on the corner of South (Warwick) and Grove (Russell) Streets. According to Joseph Tomasini, the present owner, the house was set to front on South Street, which ran between Naylor's and the frame house immediately south, belonging to Francis Martin, a quarryman. That portion of the road was later discontinued, so now the address is 51 Russell Street. Examination of the side facing the original roadway reveals that the stones are more finished than on the other sides.

From the period after the Civil War right through the beginning of the new century, sandstone for institutional buildings was in vogue in New Haven. This was naturally favorable to Fair Haven quarrymen and their employees. Indeed, the Rev. Mr. Haven in 1874 wrote that he wouldn't be surprised "if in a few years quarrying should become one of the most important branches of business persued [*sic*] in this town."

Sandstone in rich shades of red, brown and yellow continued to be the popular choice for churches, of which one of the most magnificent was Christ Church on Broadway. This Gothic edifice, designed by Henry Vaughan in 1895,



Captain Edwin G. Thompson's house at 66 South Front Street, built c. 1842.

was the congregation's third home. According to the Rev. William Kibitz, it was constructed of stone from the Blakeslee quarry. C.W. Blakeslee was a member of the vestry at the time. The great fortress-like sanctuary Plymouth Church, at Chapel and Sherman, was another built in 1896 of sandstone from the Blakeslee quarry.

On November 3, 1894, the Rev. Stewart Means wrote regarding the proposed St. John's Episcopal Church at Orange and Humphrey Streets: "The material is our own East Haven brown stone laid in broken ashlar." (This information was supplied by the present warden of the church, Isabel M. Murray.)

The Forbes Memorial Chapel of the Epiphany, erected next to the old Forbes homestead, 153 Forbes Avenue, was designed in the Gothic mode by Mantle Fielding of Philadelphia of "well-known East Haven stone" in 1907. Betsy Forbes Bradley bequeathed her ancestral home and land to St. Paul's Church with a legacy to build a chapel. The homestead was converted into a parish house and connected by a cloister to the chapel. The buildings, vacated by the parishioners in 1964, are now the property of the Eastern Plumbing & Heating Company.

Yale University was also caught up in the building spree. Lawrance Hall, on

the Old Campus, was built of brick in 1885, but "hard and solid East Haven stone was used for the basement." Vanderbilt Hall, a collegiate Gothic building of East Haven brownstone, designed in 1894 by Charles Haight, was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt in memory of their son, William Henry. Kirtland Hall, 2 Hillhouse Avenue, is a neo-Renaissance building constructed of East Haven brownstone in 1902. It was a gift of Mrs. Lucy Boardman as a memorial to her uncle Jared Potter Kirtland, M.D., Yale Class of 1815.

There are other Yale buildings whose sandstone origins are in doubt: Cloister Hall (1888), at 1 Hillhouse; Alpha Delta Phi (1894), 15 Hillhouse; Wolf's Head Society (1884), 77 Prospect Street; and Phelps Hall and Archway (1896), the last being one of a dozen Yale buildings in architect Charles Haight's repertoire. Still others, such as Battell Chapel and Durfee, Dwight and Osborn Halls, were constructed of sandstone but not from Fair Haven (East Haven) quarries.

Although the market for sandstone was predominantly in public institutions, a few people still ordered it for their homes. The Rev. Edwin E. Hall in 1869 bought land off Lexington Street (then called Prospect) in Fair Haven and built a large, mansard-roofed structure of random sandstones. He made it his home and also a private boarding school for boys. The building's address is now 21 Rock Hill Road.

Seawalls or bulkheads at Water Street Park and Fort Hale Park were constructed of East Haven stone as ordered by the recently created New Haven Park Department in 1892. "Suitable gate posts of stone" were also voted to be erected at various park entrances such as Fort Wooster and Fort Hale. There they stand today, reminders of a bygone era of formality.

At the height of the quarrying operations in the 1880s, the scene on Fair Haven Heights must have been a noisy, bustling one. Not as many trees covered the rocky ledges then, and the swaying steam derricks could be seen poking their long necks above the hills. Sounds of detonations punctuated the heavy air of summer days, much to the annoyance of residents close to the quarries, who claimed that the blasts cracked their windows. The wail of the locomotive whistle and wheezing of steam as the Shore Line trains chugged among the houses on the east side of the river contributed to the habitual commotion. Ascending the hill, the flat cars stopped near the quarries to be filled with rock bound for parts near and far. Bottom-dump carts loaded with stacked blocks of stone rumbled down the dusty roads to the river, where barges waited to be laden with the shipments destined for other ports. The success of the quarries depended always on the facilities for getting the produce to market.

Most of the inhabitants didn't mind the hubbub because it meant jobs—and food on the table and clothes in the closet. Skilled laborers were in constant demand. In the 1881 City Directory, nine quarrymen, three stone-cutters, six masons and five chemists were listed as living in Fair Haven East, either in private homes or boarding in a barracks-like building on Grove (Russell) Street.

"Chemist" was the designation given the man who mixed the explosive chemicals and set the charges. The first step in the quarrying operation was for a series of holes to be made with a star drill and a sledge hammer where the stone was to be broken away from the sides of the quarry. The holes were lightly charged with the slow-burning black powder, which was fired simultaneously to get an even break. To make six-foot blocks of sandstone, the holes needed to be at least five inches deep and three-fourths inch in diameter.

Charles and Harvey B. Lancraft were the chemists in the family concern. They, with their brothers William M., George E. and Henry S. Lancraft, had taken over the East Haven Redstone Quarry when their father died in 1876. It wasn't long thereafter, however, when the affairs of the business were left largely with William, as the others became more involved in oyster dealing. William, in turn, became more interested in the contracting side of things, so he sold out to another prominent stone dealer, Francis Donnelly. Thus ended the Lancraft family's century-old tenure with sandstone quarrying. Some descendants now live in Essex and Killingworth but none in Fair Haven.

Francis Donnelly was an Irishman who had come to America in 1836. His early occupation was real estate and, owning a lot of land in Fair Haven, he promoted its development as an up-and-coming neighborhood for his fellow countrymen. Credit is given him for straightening and grading Ferry Street and bordering it with trees. "Donnelly purchased the East Haven brownstone quarries in 1879 and has since quarried and furnished stone very extensively for building in New Haven and elsewhere. Among conspicuous edifices built of this stone are several of the College buildings of the sightly and artistic Yale group."[7]

Other dealers in East Haven brownstone were Peter Small, M.W. Burwell, F. Brazos, Walter Connor and Freeman P. Clark. (At the Clark quarry was found a specimen of *stegomus arcuatus Marsh,* the oldest fossil known from this region; it has been preserved at the Peabody Museum.) These stone contractors, however, were not in the same class as the prominent firm of C.W. Blakeslee & Sons, which by the turn of the century employed two hundred people and over three hundred horses.

Charles Wells Blakeslee, at age nineteen, had started a one-man teamster business in 1844. "His first piece of equipment was the proverbial wheelbarrow, augumented [*sic*] shortly by the purchase of a horse," according to a centennial booklet printed by the company in 1944. "When this valuable acquisition became a victim of the colic, Benjamin English, father of Governor James E. English, liking the cut of young Charles, offered to loan him the price of another horse."[8] One of his early contracts was hauling trap rock to the original Blake stone crusher at West Rock.

Many years later, Blakeslee was joined by his sons Dennis A., then Dwight W., and finally by Clarence. The company expanded the general carting

operation to quarrying, crushing and cutting stone. Land was bought in Fair Haven Heights in 1912 (now the Newton Refining Corporation property), and the quarry there, plus those at West Rock and Sleeping Giant, were all incorporated under the name of the Connecticut Quarries. By 1927 the Blakeslee company had become the only large-scale dealers in Fair Haven stone. Other Blakeslees joined the firm: M. Grant, Harold L. and Albert D., as well as William T. Gilbert, related by marriage. The latter's son James Gilbert was president of the company when it was terminated in May 1976.

Several factors were involved in the decline of the long-time quarry industry. Jerry Camarota, Jr., who for many years worked for the Blakeslees, as did his father and grandfather, said that the high-grade sandstone finally ran out in Fair Haven while quarries elsewhere were still going strong. There had always been competition from quarries in Portland, Connecticut; Longmeadow, Massachusetts; New Jersey and Ohio, but the local quarries had been able to hold their own while the supply lasted.

Jim Gilbert commented that sandstone for decorative architecture was supplanted by the cheaper, more manageable reinforced concrete and that in 1930 C.W. Blakeslee & Sons established the first commercial pre-mixed concrete plant in the territory.

A final reason put an end to the quarrying: land on the Heights was filling up with homes during the thirties. A few men, including Pasquale Nargi and Peter Ruggiero, continued small quarrying activity off Russell Street, but by 1947 property deeds in the area carried restrictive clauses. Armando Prati of 38 Lexington Avenue said that when he bought his place the deed contained the phrase: "subject to the restriction that said land shall not be used as a quarry." Today the only company quarrying any rock in the district is the New Haven Terminal, on its property near the old peat meadows.

Fair Haven's chief industries of yore, oystering, shipbuilding and quarrying, were all in their prime at the same time, and they all dwindled together. But although the days of quarrying on the Heights are over, the many handsome sandstone buildings remain to be admired. And they will be around for a good many years longer if time alone is the determinant.

NOTES

1. James D. Dana, *On the Four Rocks of the New Haven Region,* 1891, p. 102.
2. Stephen Dodd, *East Haven Register,* 1824, p. 68.
3. Sarah E. Hughes, *History of East Haven,* 1908, p. 83.
4. Charles Hervey Townshend, *British Invasion of New Haven,* 1879, p. 13.
5. Lancraft Mss., NHCHS genealogy.

6. John W. Barber, *Connecticut Historical Collections*, 1836, p. 158.

7. Edward E. Atwater, *History of the City of New Haven*, 1887, p. 525.

8. *A Century of Heavy Construction by C.W. Blakeslee & Sons Through Three Generations*, 1944.

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